SPECIAL ISSUE

The Nation.

SURVIVING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

WHAT MUST BE DONE

MAY 7, 2007

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LETTERS

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

KEEP THOSE FILMS COMING...

Memphis

■ To add to everyone's list of films on labor ["Letters," April 16], I recommend a recent documentary about work, poverty and unionizing: Roger Weisberg's 2005 *Waging a Living: Working Overtime in Pursuit of the Elusive American Dream*. It supports a discussion of some of our widespread social and economic problems. And the stories of the three women and a man depicted make it of interest for gender studies and feminist economics classes.
JANE HENRICI

Cliffside Park, NJ

■ Has historical amnesia taken over? One of the great labor films, *Salt of the Earth*, made during the madness of McCarthyism and under unbelievable pressure and violence, is not mentioned by any of your letter writers. It is based on a strike in New Mexico and directed by one of the Hollywood Ten (H. Biberman). He was arrested during the filming and directed the film by letter and phone from prison. It's the only blacklisted movie in American film history. It's a must-see. IRV SILVER

St. Louis

■ I'd like to add a great movie about the American working class: *Blue Collar* (1978), directed by Paul Schrader and starring Richard Pryor in what may be his finest film performance. *Blue Collar* is both a funny movie and a biting social commentary about three friends at a car plant who seek revenge against their uncaring bosses and crooked union officials. This movie is one of the best on class warfare and one of the most overlooked. REBECCA STITH

SPRING: A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY TURNS

Garland, Tex.

■ Eric Alterman's "The Many Man-Crushes of Chris Matthews" [April 9] was absolutely hilarious. I read it three times and couldn't stop laughing. JOANNE CALLAHAN

Pinedale, Wyo.

■ I have read *The Nation* for years and have never read a more offensive column than "The Many Man-Crushes of Chris Matthews." If it was meant to be funny, it wasn't. If it was meant to be perceptive, it wasn't. If it was meant to disparage a real friend of the left, it succeeded. Chris Matthews asks the questions that I want asked and other commentators don't ask. Sometimes people on the left just don't get it. Yes, *I* have a crush on Chris Matthews, longtime liberal—liberal that I am.
GRACE ANDERSON

Shirley, NY

■ How many times is Chris Matthews going to bring up Hillary Clinton's high-pitched voice?
TOM PISANO

Hornell, NY

■ Eric Alterman's on-cue column overlooked Matthews's inappropriate comments to female guests. He comments on their looks in a manner that is way, way out of line.
JEANETTE S. HARRIS

South Riding, Va.

■ Chris Matthews, like Seinfeld, notices that socks disappear in the dryer. But instead of socks, Matthews's observations focus on Barack Obama's love handles or how Dick Cheney reminds us of the crabby old neighbor we stayed away from when we were kids. KIM STANLEY

La Mesa, Calif.

■ One more Chris Matthews "man-crush," one more nauseating than all the others: Tom DeLay. Matthews insists on having this party hack, who has done zero to improve anything or anyone, on his program. BRUCE LISMAN

Joliet, Ill.

■ Matthews made his reputation by acting like a liberal. He interviews Trent Lott, *never* calling him on his nay vote on Nixon's impeachment. The real proof: After interviewing G. Gordon Liddy, Matthews calls him "a great man!" No more need be said. JOHN LAPIKAS

McHenry, Ill.

■ Eric Alterman has finally put things in perspective for me and answered all my questions in one easy-to-read column. I've been questioning the same comments made by Chris Matthews over the last few years. Now I know—it's a man-crush kind of thing. Absolutely! Chris recently stated that he's very confused as to why Mitt Romney was able to raise so much money in his bid for President. Someone needs to tell him, "It's his chin, Chris! It's his chin!"
BRENDA DRAKE

GARDASIL: TO VACCINATE OR NOT?

Atlanta

■ Concerning Karen Houppert's "Who's Afraid of Gardasil?" [March 26]: While the idea of a human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is wonderful news for women, I would be a lot more comfortable with it if more tests were being done. In the past we've seen promising medicines turn out to be horrific nightmares.

We should approach this very slowly.
A. COOK

letters@thenation.com

Portola Valley, Calif.

■ This is not a safe vaccine. The government collects data on vaccine damage, as reported by doctors and patients, and Gardasil has been listed with increasing frequency. In fact, Gardasil problems in January accounted for more than 12 percent of the nearly 1,500 vaccine damage reports! STEVEN RUBIN

New York City

■ Only months ago the medical establishment was congratulating itself on the sudden drop in breast cancer rates, though the decline was attributed to the fact that doctors had stopped prescribing HRT to menopausal women. Millions of women had been strongly encouraged to take these drugs, in part to prevent the very disease they wound up causing. This is what happens when populations are used as guinea pigs. Now they want to do the same to girls as young as 11. The FDA has already received eighty-two reports of serious adverse events, tests have not been performed to see if the vaccine itself causes cancer and the effect on reproductive capacity is unknown. Gardasil is genetically engineered but has not been tested for genotoxicity. Long-term effects won't be known for years, when these girls will provide the statistics. By then Merck will have raked in billions and, having orchestrated regulations to preclude any liability for vaccine damage, will laugh all the way to the bank.

Many of the annual 6,200 HPV-induced cervical cancers could be prevented with better education and screening. Read Christine Northrup on this: "It is far more prudent to optimize a woman's nutrition and lifestyle so that her immune system is functioning optimally" than to mandate a vaccine whose risks are unknown. DONNA NIEMANN

New Haven, Conn.

■ I don't believe the government has the right to mandate any kind of medical treatment or procedure. Citizens of this country have a constitutional right to privacy, and any kind of mandated medical procedure is a clear violation of that right. CHRIS BOUSQUET

Santa Cruz, Calif.

■ Legislative momentum to promote HPV vaccinations would be better spent forcing universal availability rather than inevitability. Given the choice, most parents will opt for inoculation, which will provide the desired public health benefits without reinforcing a dangerous precedent. LOREN WILLIAMS

South Riding, Va.

■ Can you imagine a vaccine to prevent prostate cancer? That would be a welcome scien-

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EDITORIALS

Going Green

Everyone knows it—even, probably, those who continue to deny it: Climate change threatens the future of the planet. A few simple facts tell the story. Even 125,000 years ago, during the last period of significant global warming, atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO_2) were not as high as they are today. Yet sea levels were much higher, about thirteen to nineteen feet above today's levels. Much of what is now New York, London and Shanghai was under water. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—a collection of more than 2,000 climate scientists and government representatives from around the world—has declared with virtual certainty that global warming caused by fossil fuel–based industrialization is upon us. Even if the world economy collapsed tomorrow and all CO_2 emissions suddenly stopped, the earth would see several more decades of global warming because of the amount of CO_2 already released. The challenge now is to stop runaway global warming: the process by which the effects of climate change "feed back" to compound the original problem in a vicious cycle that culminates in radically rising sea levels, mass drought, aquatic extinctions and social breakdown as the major cities of the world are overwhelmed by water, refugees and violence.

Because the scientific debate about global warming has been settled, this issue of *The Nation* focuses on how we should respond. How do we *mitigate* the crisis—i.e., make the rapid and radical shift away from fossil fuels so as to avoid runaway climate change? At the same time, how do we *adapt* to the changes in our climate that are already inevitable? The point is to grapple with the political economy of mitigation and adaptation—processes that pose distinct yet interrelated political and economic challenges. Consider, for example, the "climate divide": The rich countries are disproportionately responsible for causing global warming, but it is the poor countries of the world that will suffer the most from the changes in store. This inequity has given rise to calls for climate reparations, in which wealthy nations subsidize the process of adaptation in places facing imminent peril, like Bangladesh.

At the same time, developed countries like the United States bear a special responsibility for mitigating the climate crisis. Americans are 4 percent of the world's population, but we release 25 percent of all greenhouse gases. If we see the upper limit of atmospheric carbon stabilization at 400 to 450 parts per million, at which level the mean atmospheric temperature would be 3.6 Fahrenheit degrees higher than now, the heavy polluters of the world—the United States, the European Union, Japan and now China and India—need to reduce emissions by as much as 80 percent. That will require a massive effort. The Kyoto Protocol, widely viewed as inadequate, expires in 2012 and must be replaced by a far more stringent successor agreement. For its part, Europe has tightened its carbon reduction targets to 20 percent by 2020. In the United States, legislative proposals by Henry Waxman in the House and Bernie Sanders and Barbara Boxer in the Senate set the necessarily ambitious goal: 80 percent reduction in carbon emissions from their 1990 levels by 2050. To meet such targets, we'll have to discourage emissions by putting a price on polluting gases like

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methane and carbon. The best way to do that is through taxation, which would be offset by tax breaks to soften the impact on poor and middle-class households and to encourage green job growth and investment. But such ideas face formidable resistance from a political establishment beholden to entrenched interests—the oil and coal industries—that stand to lose out. Those industries have sunk billions of dollars in investments that would depreciate in value if real carbon reduction targets were achieved. Thus, they fight tooth and nail with lies and canards to keep things as they are.

Lest despair take hold, consider that we are reaching a political tipping point; wide swaths of the global public are finally focusing on climate change. The momentum should increase as more and more people see the opportunities in the transition to a green economy. The capital markets of the world are clogged with money looking for profitable outlets. Surplus capital bids up asset value in one bubble after another: dot coms, stocks, real estate. And now, gluttonous military spending mops up more capital and gives it profitable expression as military Keynesianism on a vast scale. The United States hemorrhages $8 billion a month on the lost cause of the Iraq War. A crash course of mitigation and postcarbon transformation would harness huge amounts of surplus capital, employ millions of people, stimulate consumption, generate tax revenue and raise living standards while returning reasonable profits to firms building solutions to the problem of climate change.

Among those working on the link between job creation and clean energy is the Apollo Alliance—a coalition of labor, environmental, civil rights, urban, farm and business groups. Their plan includes: promoting renewables; upgrading existing energy infrastructure; improving efficiency in transportation, industry and buildings; research in new clean technology; and smart growth for metropolitan areas. Apollo estimates that $300 billion spent on its plan would generate 3 million new jobs and $1 trillion in additional GDP over its ten-year development. Call it the Green Deal: an environmentally based New Deal approach to crisis. Or call it whatever you want—the outline makes sense. In fact, these ideas have been percolating for years but have only recently begun to gain traction, as climate shifts have become unmistakable, with massive storms like Hurricane Katrina as well as the most recent nor'easter. Step It Up 2007, the nationwide mobilization in mid-April, kept the pressure on from below. But the scale and urgency of the crisis are such that the push for change must come from on high as well. In that regard the Supreme Court's recent rebuke of President Bush's EPA for failing to regulate greenhouse gas emissions was significant. While we can no longer prevent global warming, we can survive it. The knowledge is there; so is the capacity. What we need—now, while there's still time—is the collective will to act.

ON THE WEB: The killings at Virginia Tech were, as the university's president said, "a tragedy…of monumental proportions." Read the reflections of Bruce Shapiro, Katrina vanden Heuvel and others at www.thenation.com.

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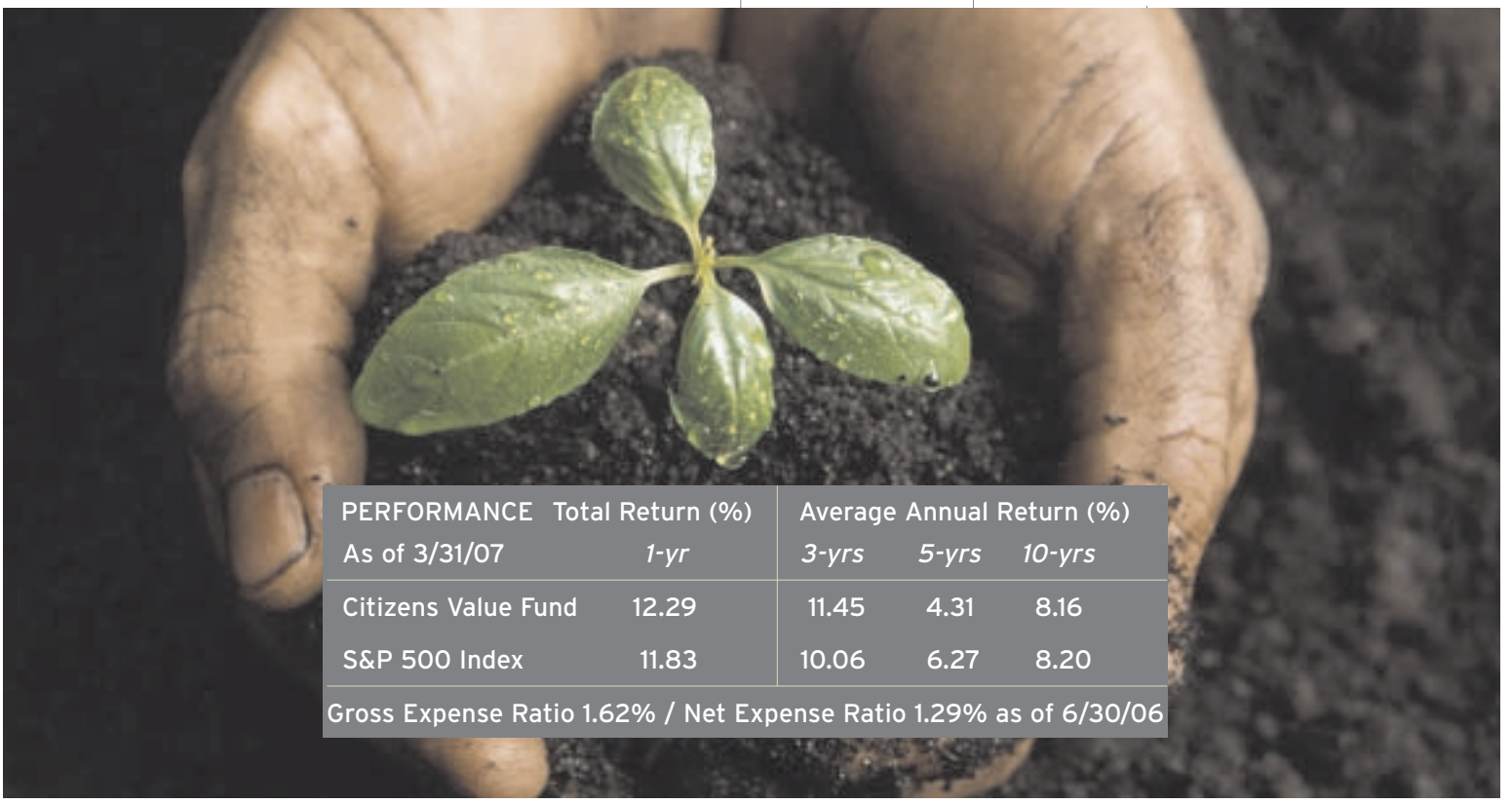

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COMMENT

Disseminate Information, Protect Democracy

The following is a shortened version of a letter drafted by Nation *president Teresa Stack and signed by her and her counterparts at more than a dozen independent journals, including* National Review, The American Spectator *and* Mother Jones.

James C. Miller III
Chairman, Postal Board of Governors

We write to you today on a matter of great urgency. The recent decision of the Postal Service Board of Governors (BOG) to accept the startling periodical rate recommendations of the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) undermines the historic foundation of our national mail system. These new rates will have grave consequences for disseminating the very type of information our Founding Fathers strove to protect and foster when they established the public postal service.

As the publishers of small national magazines that focus primarily on politics and culture, we share a common mission of providing the information essential to a flourishing democracy. We struggle to inform the national dialogue in a way the Founders believed essential to the health of this country. As journals of opinion and ideas, we do not do it for the money; we do it because, like the Founders, we believe it to be a public good.

As you know, in May 2006 the United States Postal Service proposed a rate increase for periodicals of about 11.7 percent, an increase that would have affected all periodicals more or less equally. Instead, in February the PRC recommended a version of the rate proposal put forward by Time Warner, which had previously been rejected by the PRC and strongly opposed by the USPS. This proposal would have a disproportionately adverse effect on small national publications while easing the burden on the largest magazines.

The decision was followed by an industry "comment period" of only eight working days, an impossibly short time for small publications to digest changes so complex that to this day there is no definitive computer model to fully assess them. Nonetheless, the new rates are scheduled to take effect July 15.

We now know that small titles will be devastated. According to an analysis by McGraw-Hill (but not, inexplicably, done by the PRC or BOG), about 5,700 small-circulation publications will incur rate increases exceeding 20 percent; another 1,260 publications will see increases above 25 percent; and hundreds more, increases above 30 percent. Some small magazines will no doubt go out of business. Meanwhile, the largest magazines will enjoy the benefit of much smaller increases and in some cases, decreases. To make matters even worse, editorial content charges will now be based on distance. The system of charging one price however far editorial content travels, which has existed since our country's founding, seems to have been summarily dismissed by the PRC, and then by the governors, with little thought of its future impact.

These increased postal rates will also raise barriers for prospective new publishers, thus destroying competition in the periodicals market and locking in the privileged positions of the largest firms. While it is understandable that Time Warner would relish the idea of making it more difficult for new competitors, there is no reason to think that it is in the interest of the American people or the market economy.

Since its inception, the US Postal Service has recognized small magazines like ours as serving a vital function in the American political system. And while the realities of the marketplace no doubt require some adjustments to postal costs, the PRC's new rates turn the ideals of Jefferson and Madison on their head. These ideals have been eloquently defended in all previous rate cases. Instead, we will now have an entirely cost-based system.

Even if the argument can be made that such a system trumps all other interests, the USPS remains in effect a government monopoly. We are small businesses, and to raise costs so dramatically without our input and with no recourse is devastating. Comments were heard only from companies that could afford to provide them, via expert testimony and top-notch legal advice. No one considered how a small business would accommodate a 30 percent increase in one of the most expensive items in its budget.

The PRC has managed to take a historically preferred class of mail and turn it into the most complex, cost-based and bureaucratically burdened of all mail classes in the span of a single rate case. Periodical rates ought to be the least cost-based, because that class exists for content.

In accepting the Time Warner rate plan, the PRC and the governors have allowed the cost-based proposal of one of the country's largest mailers to prevail over public and small business concerns. Small magazines that have historically contributed to the diversity of voices and opinions and have an outsized effect on our public discourse are now potentially silenced so that the likes of Time Warner can mail *People* more cheaply.

We appreciate that costs increase and mail technologies change. However, the mail system is a public system, and the dissemination of small magazines remains a public good. Accordingly, any changes should be implemented gradually and on a cost-averaged basis so as not to threaten the very existence of small magazines. We ask that:

1. the Board of Governors move quickly to delay the implementation of these new rates, allowing an additional period of public comment;

2. a full assessment and justification of the new rates and their impact on the public good be completed, and if the new rates cannot be adequately assessed and justified, that the decision of the BOG be revised and the new rates revoked;

3. whether the Postal Service exercises its right to file for another rate increase under the old postal reform law or moves directly to the new law's provisions, during the next rate case the Postal Service will shift some of the added burden away from the small-circulation publications that have survived until then.

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COMMENT

The Fight of Our Lives

Congress is poised to begin a debate on what might be the only major progressive legislation with a chance in 2007—comprehensive immigration reform. One obvious obstacle is the Bush Administration, which has talked as though it cares about immigrants but has consistently acted to hurt them—through the raids that are tearing apart families, by increasing fees and requirements for naturalization and most recently with an outrageous proposal that, if implemented, could require a family of five to pay $64,000 and wait twenty-five years to get green cards. A less obvious but no less formidable obstacle to passing legislation is the division and confusion among progressives about immigration. The stakes are very high: If most white progressives remain disengaged on one of the most significant moral issues of our time, they may miss one of the biggest opportunities to build a progressive majority in the twenty-first century.

The movement that put millions of people in the streets last spring has been growing for more than a decade, enlisting hundreds of community organizations, unions, churches and ethnic media. Leaders of the immigrants' rights movement have a broad social vision that begins with immigration reform but doesn't end there, and immigrant workers have emerged as a key force that could disrupt the reigning neoliberal consensus. Winning immigration reform would produce millions of new US citizens who would change the face of the electorate. The immigrants' rights movement needs allies to win in 2007, and it will remember those who showed up for the fight.

In order to realize the potential for the kind of alliance that could produce legislation in 2007, we need a clear moral framework and a policy architecture that embodies it. There is unity within the immigrants' rights movement on some core principles: a path to citizenship for all the undocumented workers currently in the United States, which would benefit US workers by eliminating competition with workers who are especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse; elimination of backlogs in the family visa system to reunite families; and a restoration of due process and civil liberties lost in the wake of 9/11. But disagreement on the left about other key issues has the potential to undermine the prospects for legislation and fracture the coalition we need to build.

First and foremost, the debate about guest-worker programs has generated much controversy and confusion. Any immigration solution has to deal not just with the immigrants who are here but with those who will come in the future. Neither an open-borders nor closed-borders policy is workable or achievable. The status quo is a recipe for more border deaths and a growing undocumented population. Nor can progressives embrace a new guest-worker program that would install a permanent second-tier labor force without economic or political standing.

What's the way out of this bind? Progressives should support expansion of visas for immigrant workers at levels high enough to offset the number of undocumented workers who currently come to the country. These visas should be nothing like our current guest-worker program but instead must meet conditions to prevent abuse and exploitation. Any visa must provide a path to citizenship and insure that workers aren't tied to employers and can move freely in the US labor market. It must give immigrant workers full labor rights and the right to organize. A citizen-worker program—distinct from abusive temporary guest-worker programs—could give workers control of their work visas and their future in the United States.

The second contentious issue is how we deal with the impact of immigration on native-born workers. It's misleading to claim that "immigrants take jobs that US workers won't." The displacement effect has been real, especially at the low end of the labor market. Many native-born workers, especially African-American workers, have been shut out of jobs as employers have sought to hire undocumented immigrants at lower wages. Progressives need to acknowledge this and push for policies that would address the problem by strengthening civil rights and labor-law enforcement, requiring employers to post available jobs centrally so that they can't rely solely on social networks for hiring, and funding job programs for the long-term unemployed. Not all of what needs to be done to address the broken and chaotic low-wage labor market can be accomplished in the context of immigration reform, but we should use the debate to advance some concrete proposals to benefit all workers. At the same time, it's important to emphasize that US-born workers and immigrants are fundamentally in the same boat. Immigrants are coming here largely in response to economic dislocation in their home countries, propelled in part by US economic policies. The same forces driving migration are driving the erosion of living standards for all US workers.

Passing progressive immigration legislation this year is a moral imperative, for the children left without parents, for the immigrant students who can't go to college, for the hundreds who die in the Arizona desert each year and for US workers whose wages and working conditions are undercut by the current two-tier labor market. Whether progressives and immigrants can navigate choppy waters, unite behind a common moral vision and put the kind of pressure from below needed to deliver a good solution will tell us a lot about the prospects for the left in the twenty-first century. History is in our hands. DEEPAK BHARGAVA AND ANGELICA SALAS

Deepak Bhargava is executive director of the Center for Community Change. Angelica Salas is executive director of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles.

CALVIN TRILLIN

The Saga of Paul Wolfowitz

As Donald Rumsfeld's fork-tongued understudy
He hyped this stupid war. His hands are bloody.
Instead of being fired, this loyal Bushie
Then got a new position—one quite cushy.
And now, if Wolfie finally meets defeat, he
Will meet it just for grafting for his sweetie.

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IS THIS WHERE YOUR TEEN GOES TO GET HIGH?

A growing danger among teens today is the intentional abuse of prescription drugs and over-the-counter cough and cold medicines to get high.

One cause of the problem is how easily teens can find them. These drugs are most likely already in your own home. Over half of teens who abuse prescription painkillers report they get them for free from the homes of family or friends, or they take them from family or friends without asking.[1]

Most frightening, however, is that teens often don't recognize the dangers of prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse; they don't see it to be as harmful as illicit drug use. After all, these drugs are approved for medical use. But when taken without medical supervision, intentionally abused, or mixed with other drugs or alcohol, prescription medicines can be dangerous. Teens who decide to abuse prescription drugs run the risk of addiction, strokes, seizures, comas, and even death.

Unfortunately, it's a growing trend. Teens are turning away from using street drugs to prescription medications to get high. New users of prescription drugs are actually catching up with new users of marijuana.[2]

The first step for parents is to recognize the potential risks and consequences of prescription drug abuse, and to help teens understand them as well. Learn the signs, symptoms, and tips on how to talk to your teens about prescription drug abuse. **Educate yourself to protect your teens; visit www.TheAntiDrug.com or call 1-800-788-2800.**

Overall, teen use of street drugs is down. That's great; that means you've been doing your job. Now it's time to make sure that you stay updated on this latest threat to your teens' health and safety.

Signed,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Emergency Physicians
American Medical Association
American Pharmacists Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
Association for Medical Education
and Research in Substance Abuse (AMERSA)
National Association of Chain Drug Stores
National Association of School Nurses
National Council on Patient Information and Education
Partnership for a Drug-Free America
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
National Institute on Drug Abuse
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
U.S. Food and Drug Administration

PARENTS.
THE ANTI-DRUG.

www.TheAntiDrug.com

1 SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2005
2 Ibid

Office of National Drug Control Policy

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COMMENT

Impeachment Fever Rises

When Nancy Pelosi announced last fall that impeachment was "off the table," official Washington accepted that the primary avenue for holding lawless Presidents to account had been closed off by the new Speaker of the House. But the Republic's citizenry has not been so inclined. And now, with the Administration's troubles mounting, they're preparing to tell Pelosi that America and the world cannot wait until January 20, 2009, to put an end to Bush's reign of error. When Pelosi arrives at the California Democratic Convention in San Diego on April 28—the same day that activists nationwide will rally for presidential accountability—she'll find on the agenda a resolution that declares that the actions of President Bush and Vice President Cheney "warrant impeachment and trial, and removal from office." Delegates are expected to endorse the measure.

Pelosi fears that impeachment would distract from the Democratic legislative agenda and provoke an electoral backlash. History suggests she is wrong: The Watergate Congress was highly efficient, and Democrats had one of their best years ever at the polls after pressuring Richard Nixon out of office. But aside from Dennis Kucinich, who is particularly fired up about Cheney's misdeeds, few in Congress have even hinted at bucking Pelosi's ban.

Outside Washington, however, an "impeachment from below" movement is gathering steam. The President's troop surge into Iraq and his refusal to consider exit strategies has caused many to react like GOP Senator Chuck Hagel, who has observed, "The President says…he's not accountable anymore, which isn't totally true. You can impeach him." Hagel's remarks go to the heart of the surge in interest in impeachment: It stems from Bush's ongoing disregard for the demands of the electorate, the Congress and the Constitution. Legitimate impeachment initiatives are organic responses to the realities of a moment rather than purely legal procedures. Talk of impeachment gains traction when it becomes clear that an Administration is unwilling to respect the system of checks and balances or the rule of law. This explains why the allegation that Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, apparently with White House approval, pressured US Attorneys to politicize prosecutions has added so much fuel to the fire, with activists like Vermont's Dan DeWalt now saying, "I don't have any trouble getting people to agree that impeachment is necessary."

DeWalt engineered a campaign in March to get town meetings in his state to pass resolutions calling on Congress to impeach and remove Bush and Cheney. Three dozen towns did so, including Middlebury, where GOP Governor Jim Douglas found himself presiding over a meeting that voted overwhelmingly in favor of going after the two for misleading the nation about the threat posed by Iraq, condoning torture and approving illegal electronic surveillance. The goal of the town meeting movement was to get the state legislature to forward articles of impeachment to the US House. Citing Thomas Jefferson's *Manual of Parliamentary Practice*, which makes reference to the authority of state legislatures to propose impeachment, legislators in at least ten states, including Vermont, have now done so. But the real success of the initiative was to illustrate the popular appeal of impeachment—an effort helped along by *Doonesbury* cartoonist Garry Trudeau, who devoted a week of strips to the town meeting votes—and to tell members of Congress like Vermont's Peter Welch that they might want to take their cues from constituents rather than Pelosi. Welch has responded by meeting with activists and asking them for more details of Bush's high crimes and misdemeanors.

DC Democrats still put forth anti-impeachment arguments—particularly the old saw that going after Bush would just give the presidency to Cheney. Activists have countered with an "Impeach Cheney First!" campaign and a reminder that the Constitution in no way prohibits holding more than one official to account at the same time. They've also picked up an argument made by Daniel Ellsberg, of Pentagon Papers fame, who says it was the threat of impeachment that got Richard Nixon to bend to pressure from Congress to wind down the Vietnam War. "If you want to move Bush on Iraq," says Ellsberg, "get serious about impeachment." Millions of Americans are doing just that. JOHN NICHOLS

John Nichols's latest book is The Genius of Impeachment: The Founders' Cure for Royalism *(New Press).*

Kurt Vonnegut

Reading about the death of Kurt Vonnegut, who contributed essays, reviews and speeches to this magazine over the past thirty years, we reflexively said, "So it goes." *Slaughterhouse-Five*, we were repeatedly told in the obits, was popular with young people, but it's misleading to consign Vonnegut's work to the 1968 counterculture. It's no disgrace to touch young hearts.

Vonnegut's best novels were as profound as any writing ever was that deals with ultimate questions, such as death and the end of the world. He wrote in a kind of simple-minded style because what he had to tell, drawing on his own experience, was so dark and bleak that he had to wrap it in sardonic humor. He was the simpleton who knows the prince is really a frog living in a polluted swamp.

War was a form of human stupidity that aroused his anger because he'd fought in one and witnessed horrors no kid from Indiana should ever have to witness. Such as the firebombing of Dresden. He suspected, though, that humans were addicted to war. In these pages (December 31, 1983) he wrote that arms addicts who got high on preparing for World War III were as "repulsively addicted as any stockbroker passed out with his head in a toilet in the Port Authority bus terminal."

He shared Mark Twain's pessimism about the slipshod way the universe was run, but also called himself a "Christ-worshiping agnostic," who thought Jesus' call for mercy in the Sermon on the Mount was the best idea our civilization has yet produced. He wrote in his last book, *A Man Without a Country*, "And if I should ever die, God Forbid, I hope you will say, 'Kurt is up in heaven now.' That's my favorite joke."

Kurt is up in heaven now.

Read John Leonard's tribute to Vonnegut at www.thenation.com.

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ERIC ALTERMAN

The Real 'Fake News'

And then I had this dream that my whole family were just cartoon characters and our success had led to some crazy propaganda network called Fox News.

—Bart Simpson

When the Democratic presidential candidates, led by John Edwards, pulled out of the March debate that was to be co-sponsored by the Nevada branch of the party and Fox News, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page rendered the story thus: "The left blogosphere thinks the most popular cable-news network leans too far right, and so Democrats should not legitimate it by appearing." That's true as far as it goes—unusually so, given the source—but it does not go nearly far enough. For one thing, Fox is not a real news network. Just look at its reaction to the Democrats' refusal to play ball with them. On *The Beltway Boys*, Morton Kondracke likened Nevada Democrats to Communist propagandists. Bill O'Reilly found similarities between "radical" Nevada voters and Nazis. The channel's vice president, David Rhodes, accused Nevada Democrats of being "controlled by radical fringe out-of-state interest groups." As Media Matters's Eric Boehlert pointed out, "Of course, a real news organization wouldn't issue a nasty statement like that, nor would it give the statement exclusively to Matt Drudge, which Fox News did."

As the scrupulously fair-minded reporter Ron Brownstein notes, "Through its language, its news decisions and its hosts—[Fox] generally functions more like a cog in the Republican message machine than as a conventional news organization that attempts to abide, however imperfectly, by the traditional standards of (yes) fairness and balance."

Fox, like the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation and the *Washington Times*, is a conservative counter-establishment institution designed to ape the functions of the real thing, doing double duty by firing up the troops with custom-crafted ideological spin, "analysis" and phony scholarship while confusing the rest of the world with nonsense disguised as news. Fox's journalistic transgressions are legion and need not detain us long here. A 2004 Center for Media and Public Affairs study found that at the height of the presidential campaign, just 13 percent of Fox News panelists' comments on Democratic candidate John Kerry were positive, compared with 50 percent for Bush. As Fox London bureau chief Scott Norvell has put it, "Even we at Fox News manage to get some lefties on the air occasionally and often let them finish their sentences before we club them to death and feed the scraps to Karl Rove and Bill O'Reilly."

Much of the MSM has played along with the Fox charade. The *Wall Street Journal* went so far as to publish a correction when a reporter termed the network "sympathetic to the Bush cause and popular with Republicans." And with the exception of a few combative on-air counterattacks—most notably by Bill Clinton and Barney Frank—so too have liberals and Democrats, offering themselves as bit players in Bart Simpson's nightmare. The network has made a specialty of promoting what might be termed "even the *New Republic* liberals"—that is, liberals who specialize in bashing liberals and liberalism. As Alex Koppelman demonstrated on *Salon*, Fox frequently features the likes of Susan Estrich complaining that Al Gore has gone "off the deep end" when he lays bare the Administration's deception in the "war on terror." Pat Caddell whines that only "the real fringe of this party" wants to unseat Joe Lieberman. And, of course, barely a night goes by that nasty Alan Colmes doesn't punch poor Sean Hannity in the knuckles with his face.

Fox viewers, according to a study by the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes, become more misinformed about the world the more they watch the network. A recent survey by the Pew Research Center found viewers of *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* likely to be better informed than the average Fox News consumer. But the impact of Fox's brand of fake news is not limited to its own viewers. When the hapless Katie Couric recently misreported that Barack Obama "grew up praying in a mosque," she was parroting a discredited Fox report that had appeared three months earlier.

The question of Fox's malevolence is settled. What remains is a disagreement among liberals over an appropriate response. Some argue that liberals ought to refuse to participate at all because it is impossible to do so without playing by Fox's fixed rules. But by sitting it out, the counterargument goes, they are shutting themselves off from cable's largest audience, and inviting the accusation of fear and wimpiness. What's more, there's money involved. A political reactionary personally, Rupert Murdoch is an equal opportunity corruptor when it comes to promoting his media businesses. Murdoch's NewsCorp gave only $5,000 last year to the Congressional Black Caucus's political action committee, but it is listed as a "Patron and Sponsor" on the webpage of the CBC foundation. Even so, Democrats wisely decided to pull out of yet a second Fox co-sponsored debate in April.

As John Edwards explained when announcing his withdrawal, "There's just no reason for Democrats to give Fox a platform to advance the right-wing agenda while pretending to be objective." He also noted that he had appeared on the network more than thirty times. Edwards is right. The proper response to a Fox attack disguised as a question is, "Well, Brit, I appeared on this biased show of yours to set your viewers straight about the BS you and your fellow right-wingers have been handing them. Now here's the truth…" This might shame the station some and alert Couric's producers, among others, that they'd better lift their "news" from a better class of journalist next time. With the constant stream of right-wing and MSM abuse having gone unanswered for so long, it's way past time liberals introduced their adversaries to the concept of the left hook—aimed at the right mouth. ■

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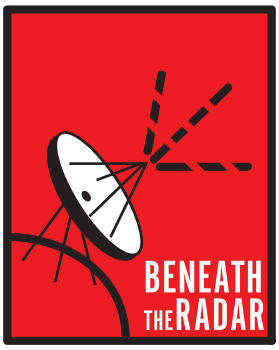
GARY YOUNGE

The Good Victim



On December 5, 1955, Martin Luther King Jr. took to the pulpit at the Holt Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, and thanked the Lord for Rosa Parks. "And, since it had to happen, I'm happy it happened to a person like Mrs. Parks," he said. "For nobody can doubt the boundless outreach of her integrity. Nobody can doubt the height of her character, nobody can doubt the depth of her Christian commitment and devotion to the teachings of Jesus."

The truth is, it didn't have to happen to Mrs. Parks. Nine months earlier it had already happened to Claudette Colvin, a 15-year-old activist who was ejected from the city's buses in almost identical circumstances. But the local civil rights leadership felt Colvin was too dark, too poor and, once she fell pregnant, too compromised to spearhead the kind of struggle they had in mind. And so they dropped her and waited for a better test case.

"Mrs. Parks was a married woman," said Ed Nixon, a civil rights leader in Montgomery. "She was morally clean.… If there was ever a person we would've been able to [use to] break the situation that existed on the Montgomery city line, Rosa L. Parks was the woman to use."

There are few things as corrosive as the notion of the worthy victim. With the indecency of the crime established, the emphasis shifts to the relative decency of those who suffered as a result of it. A rape is qualified by the behavior and attire of the woman; the human rights abuses at Guantánamo are deemed worse if the prisoner is innocent.

Consciously or not, activists frequently make strategic calculations regarding which victim best exemplifies the full extent of the injustice. In the short term, the tactic might occasionally be justified. "They picked the right person," Colvin once told me. "They needed someone who could bring together all the classes. They wouldn't have followed me." But the sacrifice of the unworthy nearly always compromises the ultimate principle—that women have the right to wear what they want free of harassment; that even terrorists deserve a fair trial; that working-class, single-parent, dark-skinned black women are entitled to civil rights.

Which brings us to the Don Imus affair and his racist, misogynistic branding of the Rutgers women's basketball team as a group of "nappy-headed ho's." For all the column inches spent on it, Imus's demise never really demanded much great philosophical reflection. He thrived on his right to offend; others exercised their right to be offended. For the first time in a long time the balance of forces was against him. He prided himself on being inflammatory; finally he got burned.

But in the stampede to remove him from the airwaves, some crucial principles were crushed underfoot. For the consensus soon emerged that the problem with his comments was not that they were said at all but that they were said about the wrong people.

"Imus lost his job not when he leveled his double-barreled slur at the Rutgers team, but when the team held its press conference," argued *Newsweek*. "The image of the self-possessed young women encouraged employees at NBC to rise up and call for Imus's firing; their poise may also have persuaded advertisers to begin pulling their sponsorships of Imus's show."

If these women had less poise maybe Imus would still be on the air. But they suffered as only black people are supposed to suffer—with dignity. This is not a criticism of the team or even a description so much as a statement of fact. The crowning of the worthy victim has very little to do with the actual victims, and everything to do with how those with more power or less principle or both seek to cast them in a broader morality play of their own crafting.

These women were doing what they do best. "These young ladies are valedictorians," said their coach, Vivian Stringer. "Future doctors, musical prodigies and, yes, even Girl Scouts. They are all young ladies of class. They are distinctive, articulate." Articulate like Barack Obama? Apparently, to be worthy of white America's sympathy, they had to be. For corporate America to weigh its profits against their dignity and decide in their favor, nothing less than perfection would have done.

The trouble with all this is that black women's lives are far from perfect. Almost two-thirds of black women between 18 and 24 don't go to college. They are, however, three and a half times more likely to go to prison and three times more likely to be killed with a firearm than white women. They earn 52 percent of white men's wages, and 27 percent live below the poverty line.

It took Snoop Dogg to break it down. When asked about the difference between Imus's comments and rap lyrics he answered, "It's a completely different scenario.… [Rappers] are not talking about collegiate basketball girls who have made it to the next level in education and sports. We're talking about ho's that's in the 'hood that ain't doing shit."

Two days later Kenya Franklin wrote to the *Chicago Tribune* with an almost identical argument. "If another person uses rap music to defend Imus's comments, I will scream! Those women were NOT video 'ho's' shaking their asses; they are athletes and college students that are working hard to make something of themselves."

With these green lights, what was to stop Rupert Murdoch's *New York Post* from abandoning the Imus story and plastering a huge photograph of Crystal Gail Mangum—the stripper whose rape case against the Duke lacrosse players had just collapsed—across its front page. NOW AMERICA CAN SEE HER FACE, barked the headline. THE DUKE LIAR—SEX CASE DROPPED.

Neither worthy nor apparently a victim, Mangum became fair game. If Imus had held his tongue for just a week he could have said the same thing. There would have been no outcry. It would have been just another day in America. ■

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ARTICLES

JAMES HANSEN
WHY WE CAN'T WAIT
A 5-STEP PLAN FOR SOLVING THE GLOBAL CRISIS

There's a huge gap between what is understood about global warming by the relevant scientific community and what is known about global warming by those who need to know: the public and policy-makers. We've had, in the past thirty years, one degree Fahrenheit of global warming. But there's another one degree Fahrenheit in the pipeline due to gases that are already in the atmosphere. And there's another one degree Fahrenheit in the pipeline because of the energy infrastructure now in place—for example, power plants and vehicles that we're not going to take off the road even if we decide that we're going to address this problem.

The Energy Department says that we're going to continue to put more and more CO_2 in the atmosphere each year—not just additional CO_2 but more than we put in the year before. If we do follow that path, *even for another ten years*, it guarantees that we will have dramatic climate changes that produce what I would call a different planet—one without sea ice in the Arctic; with worldwide, repeated coastal tragedies associated with storms and a continuously rising sea level; and with regional disruptions due to freshwater shortages and shifting climatic zones.

I've arrived at five recommendations for what should be done to address the problem. If Congress were to follow these recommendations, we could solve the problem. Interestingly, this is not a gloom-and-doom story. In fact, the things we need to do have many other benefits in terms of our economy, our national security, our energy independence and preserving the environment—preserving creation.

First, there should be a moratorium on building any more coal-fired power plants until we have the technology to capture and sequester the CO_2. That technology is probably five or ten years away. It will become clear over the next ten years that coal-fired power plants that do not capture and sequester CO_2 are going to have to be bulldozed. That's the only way we can keep CO_2 from getting well into the dangerous level, because our consumption of oil and gas alone will take us close to the dangerous level. And oil and gas are such convenient fuels (and located in countries where we can't tell people not to mine them) that they surely will be used. So why build old-technology power plants if you're not going to be able to operate them over their lifetime, which is fifty or seventy-five years? It doesn't make sense. Besides, there's so much potential in efficiency, we don't need new power plants if we take advantage of that.

Second, and this is the hard recommendation that no politician seems willing to stand up and say is necessary: The only way we are going to prevent having an amount of CO_2 that is far beyond the dangerous level is by putting a price on emissions. In order to avoid economic problems, it had better be a gradually rising price so that the consumer has the option to seek energy sources that reduce his requirement for how much fuel he needs. And that means we should be investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies at the same time. The result would be high-tech, high-paid jobs. And it would be very good for our energy independence, our national security and our balance of payments.

But a price on carbon emissions is not enough, which brings us to the third recommendation: We need energy-efficiency standards. That's been proven time and again. The biggest use of energy is in buildings, and the engineers and architects have said that they can readily reduce the energy requirement of new buildings by 50 percent. That goal has been endorsed by the US Conference of Mayors, but you can't do it on a city-by-city basis. You need national standards. The same goes for vehicle efficiency. We haven't had an improvement in vehicle efficiency in twenty-five or thirty years. And our national government is standing in court alongside the automobile manufacturers resisting what

This is an adaptation of a talk delivered February 26 at the National Press Club by Dr. James Hansen, director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies. Comments relating to policy are Dr. Hansen's personal opinion and do not represent a NASA position.

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the National Research Council has said is readily achievable—a 30 percent improvement in vehicle efficiency, which California and other states want to adopt.

The fourth recommendation—and this is probably the easiest one—involves the question of ice-sheet stability. The old assumption that it takes thousands or tens of thousands of years for ice sheets to change is clearly wrong. The concern is that it's a very nonlinear process that could accelerate. The west Antarctic ice sheet in particular is very vulnerable. If it collapses, that could yield a sea-level rise of sixteen to nineteen feet, possibly on a time scale as short as a century or two.

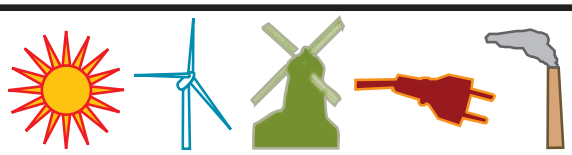
The information on ice-sheet stability is so recent that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report does not adequately address it. The IPCC process is necessarily long and drawn out. But this problem with the stability of ice sheets is so critical that it really should be looked at by a panel of our best scientists. Congress should ask the National Academy of Sciences to do a study on this and report its conclusions in very plain language. The National Academy of Sciences was established by Abraham Lincoln for just this sort of purpose, and there's no reason we shouldn't use it that way.

The final recommendation concerns how we have gotten into this situation in which there is a gap between what the relevant scientific community understands and what the public and policy-makers know. A fundamental premise of democracy is that the public is informed and that they're honestly informed. There are at least two major ways in which this is not happening. One of them is that the public affairs offices of the science agencies are staffed at the headquarters level by political appointees. While the public affairs workers at the centers are professionals who feel that their job is to translate the science into words the public can understand, unfortunately this doesn't seem to be the case for the political appointees at the highest levels. Another matter is Congressional testimony. I don't think the Framers of the Constitution expected that when a government employee—a technical government employee—reports to Congress, his testimony would have to be approved and edited by the White House first. But that is the way it works now. And frankly, I'm afraid it works that way whether it's a Democratic administration or a Republican one.

These problems are worse now than I've seen in my thirty years in government. But they're not new. I don't know anything in our Constitution that says that the executive branch should filter scientific information going to Congressional committees. Reform of communication practices is needed if our government is to function the way our Founders intended it to work.

The global warming problem has brought into focus an overall problem: the pervasive influence of special interests on the functioning of our government and on communications with the public. It seems to me that it will be difficult to solve the global warming problem until we have effective campaign finance reform, so that special interests no longer have such a big influence on policy-makers. ■

Big Is Beautiful



GREEN UTILITIES GROW, BUT NOT FAST ENOUGH.

BY CHRISTIAN PARENTI

Terry Hudgens is a classic oilman: thick drawl, square jaw, engineering degree from the University of Houston, twenty-five years with Texaco in the oil patch, which ended with his running the company's $5 billion-a-year natural gas business.

These days Hudgens lives in Portland, Oregon, epicenter of organic coffee and politically correct unshavenness. To hear him talk, you could think he is wearing Birkenstocks: Instead of the good-old-boy discourse of the petroleum industry, Hudgens now speaks about "the power of the wind" and the future of clean energy.

But this is not the story of a midlife crisis, a businessman gone groovy at age 55. Instead, Hudgens has brought his hard-nosed oil-patch logic to the frontiers of renewable energy. He is now CEO of PPM Energy, a subsidiary of ScottishPower and America's second-largest and possibly fastest-growing wind power company. He got into wind for the same reason he got into oil—it's a good way to make money.

"This is wind power on a grand scale," says Hudgens. He is talking about projects like Maple Ridge Wind Farm, the biggest power plant of any sort built in New York during 2006. The farm's 195 huge white wind turbines, with blades as long as jet wings perched atop tall steel towers, are spread across miles of ridgeline in Tug Hill, New York, catching steady airflow off the Great Lakes. On a good day this farm will produce 321 megawatts of power, as much as a midsize coal- or gas-fired plant.

The green future wasn't supposed to look like this. In the environmental imagination of the 1960s and '70s, the ecological ideal was something quaint, a village where every house had solar panels, a windmill and a vegetable garden where the lawn once soaked up pesticides. E.F. Schumacher told us that "small is beautiful," and to this day many environmentalists see large centralized systems as inherently bad.

But the speed and magnitude of climate change dictate that we begin the transformation away from carbon-based fuels now—and on a very large scale. Only a few decades remain if

Christian Parenti, a frequent Nation *contributor, is the author of* The Freedom: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq *(New Press) and is guest editor of this* Nation *special issue.*

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we are to avoid cataclysmic runaway global warming and its attendant crises. Realistically, a green transformation will have to pivot on electricity and the existing electrical grid. At one end of the grid, zero-emission vehicles can be plugged in, while at the other end zero-emission power plants—most likely owned by large for-profit companies—can feed the system electricity.

Large utility-scale renewable energy offers important economies of scale. In Denmark industrial-scale wind farms already supply 20 percent of the country's power; Germany and other European countries are close behind. The American Council on Renewable Energy estimates that with "consistent public policy" and enough investment, 70 percent of America's energy consumption could be generated from renewable, carbon-free sources by 2025. Another government-supported study estimates that with radical efficiency efforts, renewable energy could supply all US electrical needs by 2030.

So, how have renewable utilities developed thus far? Who are the key players? How do they relate to the rest of the economy? What technologies work best? And what are the real economics of creating a green power grid?

The story of wind, solar, geothermal and biomass energy development in the United States is an appalling tale of missed opportunities and willful negligence. The government has refused to use subsidies to jump-start green power, but it lavishes public money on fossil fuels. To the extent that the transition to utility-scale green power has begun—with the emergence of companies like Hudgens's PPM and huge wind farms under construction in California, Texas and the upper Midwest—it is no thanks to government initiative.

Petroleum and coal companies received more than $33 billion in direct subsidies between 1992 and 2002. The 2005 energy bill gave the oil and gas industries $6 billion in subsidies while filthy coal will get about $10 billion over the next five years. This public largesse takes the form of everything from R&D support and loan guarantees to accelerated capital depreciation schedules in the tax code.

Meanwhile, renewables have struggled to insure even a basic production tax credit, or PTC, of 1.9 cents per kilowatt hour. This modest incentive was designed to create a stable income for firms willing to risk breaking into the utilities market with new technology. It's important to stress that this tax credit does not reward construction for construction's sake; it rewards only the actual delivery of energy to the grid. But this rational little subsidy, initiated in 1992, was never enacted for more than one year at a time, and it was routinely allowed to expire. Last year the PTC was finally renewed for two consecutive years; it will likely be locked in for five or ten years. That has triggered a huge wave of private investment in green utilities.

Of all the renewables, wind is among the most profitable. Although it supplies only 1 percent of total US electricity, it is the fastest-growing of the renewables: Installed wind capacity jumped by almost a third last year, to 11,603 megawatts. That is about equal to ten major nuke plants or twenty typical coal plants.

"This is heavy industry," says Mike Jacobs of the American Wind Energy Association. "Building windmills is leading to a lot of investment and job creation in traditional industrial

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THAT'S WHY SO MANY SOMEBODIES READ IT.

Dave Matthews is a longstanding *Nation* reader.

areas." Demand for steel towers, gearboxes and those jet-wing-sized blades is creating positive links to some economically battered regions. Last year Gamesa, a large Spanish turbine manufacturer, opened a factory in an abandoned US Steel plant in Pennsylvania. The world's largest wind turbine maker, the Denmark-based Vestas, is opening a plant in Colorado. In North Dakota, sometimes called the Saudi Arabia of wind, DMI industries is emerging as the king of windmill tower construction.

Meanwhile, farmers from Texas to the Dakotas to New York are making money by "double cropping"—that is, renting space in their fields to wind-harvesting utility companies. There is now so much investment flowing into wind—tens of billions of dollars looking for projects—that turbine producers cannot keep up with demand. Many are sold out through 2008.

Thanks to twenty years of bad US energy policy, the leading wind turbine producers and wind farm operators are not American: Suzlon Energy is based in India, Gamesa in Spain, Vestas in Denmark, Mitsubishi in Japan and Siemens in Germany. GE is the only large US firm with substantial investments in wind turbine production.

"Wind is getting much more efficient," says Hudgens. Wind also rates high in terms of its so-called energy return on investment: that is, the amount of energy that goes into producing the windmills that then produce energy. "The average new windmill going online today produces about three times as much power as the ones built just seven years ago," Hudgens explains. And as the turbines get bigger and more efficient, they move more slowly and do less damage to migrating birds and bats—though the environmental threat of windmills has always been exaggerated by wind's opponents, usually rich rural landlords who find wind technology unsightly.

Solar is another promising technology with a variety of applications. Photovoltaic panels on large commercial roofs are becoming popular in Sunbelt states and even in northern states. These "rooftop" systems are highly efficient—no energy is lost in transmission—but such systems typically can't supply more than 15 percent of a client's energy needs.

Utility-scale photovoltaic farms also exist, but these are rarely bigger than sixty megawatts. However, the largest in the United States is 760 megawatts, owned by Tucson Electric Power Company, and is set to more than double in size by 2009. But photovoltaic panels are expensive; pure silicon crystals, from which they are made, are in increasingly short supply.

A simpler technology is concentrating solar power (CSP), or solar thermal, in which fields of mirrors concentrate the sun's heat onto a central tower to boil mineral oil, the steam from which then spins a turbine to create electricity. Several CSP plants generate about sixty megawatts each, though Southern California Edison has a series of linked plants in the Mojave Desert that generate 354 megawatts.

Geothermal—hot water spewing out of the ground—produces only about 2,800 megawatts nationwide but could produce fifty times that with proper investment. However, "we've been nickel-and-diming renewable development," says Karl Gawell of the Geothermal Energy Association. With surprising equanimity, he adds, "The federal government currently spends no money on geothermal R&D."

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Landfill gas, the noxious methane seeping from the underground mountains of consumer glories past, already produces a surprising amount of energy, as do various types of biomass such as "digesting" pig waste, cow manure and fermented grass clippings.

But the most productive of all the renewables is the oldest. Hydropower, mostly owned by major utility firms, produces about 9 percent of all US electricity. When electrification began in the 1880s, hydro was king; by 1920 water produced 40 percent of American electricity. During the big government, big vision days of the New Deal, hydro construction boomed: Think Hoover Dam, Grand Coulee Dam, Tennessee Valley Authority, etc.

Dams are much disparaged for killing fish—or, in fact, killing whole rivers. But state-of-the-art hydro can avoid much of that. And if climate change is allowed to run out of control, we can kiss the riparian habitat goodbye anyway. "Currently only 3 percent of existing US dams are harnessed for power," says Jeff Leahey of the National Hydropower Association. A crash program of carbon emissions reduction would no doubt involve retrofitting many existing dams with fish-friendly power turbines. But when I ask Leahey about such plans and whether the hydropower industry is lobbying for them, he is rather dispassionate. "Lately, the direction has really been away from hydro."

Cutting-edge hydropower, often called kinetic hydro, doesn't even require dams. In New York City's murky East River, a new firm called Verdant Power has installed a small field of underwater turbines that generate ten megawatts of electricity from the might of the river's tides (in fact, the East River isn't a river at all, but a tidal strait). That's small-scale, but advocates of kinetic hydro say it could be a useful part of a larger solution: New York State could produce 600 megawatts of power this way—that's half of what a typical nuke plant produces.

A major problem facing green utilities is the battered condition of our electrical grid. Two decades of radical deregulation have allowed utility companies to cut back on maintenance. Electricity demand has increased by about 25 percent since 1990, but the rate of investment in transmission facilities has decreased by about 30 percent. Companies find it more profitable to simply overload the old grid. The result is congestion, which means rising inefficiency: In 1970 only about 5 percent of electricity was lost during transmission; now the rate is almost double that. It also means large blackouts like the one that hit the Northeast and Midwest in August 2003. A green future—with plug-in vehicles at one end of the wires and renewable energy suppliers at the other end—will lean on the grid even harder.

"Five years out, the electrical grid, the infrastructure, is going to be a serious problem," says Mike Jacobs. "The last time a huge round of transmission lines was built was in the 1970s, in response to big blackouts in the 1960s." This impending crisis of the electrical infrastructure will require robust government action—tough new regulation to force reinvestment rather than profit-taking.

In canvassing the leaders of the green power industry, I was repeatedly struck by their timidity: Their discourse is polite, their vision limited. The wind industry has settled on a goal of supplying 20 percent of US electricity by 2020. Why so little? Why not more, sooner? When I press Hudgens, he says simply, "We're not projecting greater growth. But it's not impossible."

NONGOVERNMENTAL POLITICS

edited by Michel Feher
with Gaëlle Krikorian and Yates McKee

To be involved in politics without aspiring to either govern or be governed by the best leaders: such are the constraints that delineate the field of nongovernmental politics. What activists in this field seek to accomplish ranges considerably: providing humanitarian aid, protecting the environment, monitoring human-rights violations, defending the interests of corporations' stakeholders, and expanding public access to knowledge are only the most frequent among their pursuits. Yet, heterogeneous concerns notwithstanding, all involvements in nongovernmental politics are triggered by an intolerance for the effects of a particular set of governmental practices. The distinctive concern of nongovernmental activists is thus not *who* governs—who is in charge, for whose benefit, and to what alleged end—but *how* government is exercised.

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Given the crisis we face as a species, carbon-free electricity ought to be a top priority. Subsidies for fossil fuels should be eliminated and replaced with mercilessly steep carbon taxes. This money, and more, should underwrite clean power generation and a massive overhaul of the national grid. Aggressive state action may also be needed to sweep away NIMBYs who oppose wind farms on aesthetic grounds.

Though it clashes with America's free-market mythology, aggressive state intervention has propelled all the tectonic shifts in our economic history. From granting land rights for plantations, to the creation of the railroads, to the rise of Big Oil and the creation of the aerospace and high-tech industries, government support has always helped the market along. It's time to couple these traditional tools—subsidies and tax incentives—with punitive regulation and tax levies to euthanize fossil fuels and build a green grid. ■

Cooler Elites

WILL THE RULING CLASSES SAVE THE WORLD?

BY DOUG HENWOOD

When the rich and powerful gathered for their annual meeting at Davos in January, at the World Economic Forum, climate change was on their collective minds. Signs reading MAKE GREEN PAY served as a backdrop for the usual panels, featuring CEOs and high-end pundits holding forth on global finance and the terrorist threat. And, participants say, global warming was the number-one topic amid the shmoozing, where the real business of the retreat is conducted.

There's some good news here. Given the risk that a climate catastrophe could hit soon and suddenly, we've got to make some dramatic changes very quickly. What CEOs and portfolio managers think and do is an urgent question; we may not have time for mass movements to develop and force elites to do the right thing. They've got to get started now, or all could be doomed.

But you've got to wonder how serious they are about doing something. Chris Giles, economics editor of the *Financial Times*, said at Davos that there's no evidence that CEOs and Cabinet ministers were about to make "tough decisions" to avert catastrophe.

Had I been invited to Davos, I could have earned an I AM OFFSET pin by paying a mere $93 to "offset" a New York to Zurich round-trip flight—a journey that produces more than six tons of carbon emissions. About 60 percent of attendees performed this act of penance, though as A.C. Thompson and Duane Moles show in this issue, carbon offsets are a pretty dubious business. The more serious question—is Davos-style jet-setting sustainable?—wasn't likely to come up when consciences were assuaged by the offsets.

But maybe this is too negative. Let's savor the spreading climate consciousness among the corporate elite. Amazingly, the CEOs of the Big Three US auto companies and Toyota appeared before a Congressional committee in mid-March to endorse limits on carbon emissions—and they failed to rise to the bait when a Republican panel member, Joe Barton, characterized the human contribution to greenhouse gas emissions as "trivial." Even ExxonMobil, the most recalcitrant of the oil companies, has a statement of concern on its website. When the auto and oil industries feel they have to talk the climate change talk, then something is happening.

A milestone in the evolution of elite opinion was last October's publication by the British government of the *Stern Review*, an overview of the economics of climate change, named after former World Bank chief economist Nicholas Stern. While many have (rightly) criticized the review for its excessive caution, its political contribution shouldn't be underestimated: It promoted the idea in elite discourse that there would be substantial economic costs to doing nothing about climate change. As Stern showed, it's not good for the GDP when crops fail, storms intensify, pandemics spread and coastal cities flood.

Another milestone was the creation in January of the US Climate Action Partnership (USCAP). Among the players are such noted friends of the earth as GE, DuPont, PG&E, Caterpillar and BP (which tries to be the greenest of the oil companies but is still an oil company, and one with a terrible worker-safety record at that). Joining those firms are some of the most business-friendly environmental organizations, like Environmental Defense (ED) and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). While USCAP's manifesto calls for relatively modest reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and seems in no hurry to get there, it is remarkable to see such blue-chip corporate names signing on to any kind of green program, even if it is a rather pale shade of green.

And then in late March yet another group formed, Investors and Business for US Climate Action, a coalition of institutional investors (including not only union and public-sector pension funds but also big private-sector names like Merrill Lynch), foundations and businesses. Among their founding documents was a letter to George W., urging him to take serious action on the climate and asking for a meeting.

All that's not to say the denialists have gone into hiding, and it's no surprise that the dead-enders at the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page are leading the resistance. The creation of USCAP was greeted by the *Journal*'s Kimberley Strassel with a real screamer of a piece, denouncing the "jolly green giants"

Doug Henwood, who edits the Left Business Observer*, is the author, most recently, of* After the New Economy *(New Press). He's now at work on a study of the American ruling class.*

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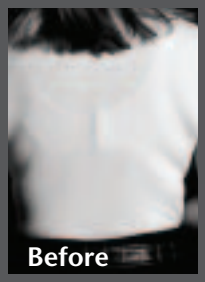

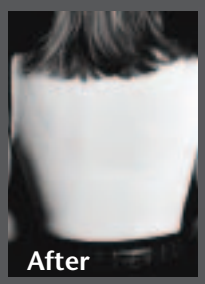

Amanda Kennedy
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It's amazing that an actress like Amanda who spent so much time getting noticed invented a product that is meant to be invisible. She spent 11 years guest starring in such shows as *Cheers*, *Remington Steele*, *Dallas* and *Hart to Hart*, but as she tiptoed into her 40's, she realized that her clothes didn't look so sleek anymore. Her uncomfortable bra accentuated every bulge. Back bulge is not a woman's fault—it's the bra. Amanda poured herself into helping greater womanhood, not those few who may be blessed with a near perfect shape. Her inspiration came from control top panty hose that Amanda cut, clipped and formed into her first prototype. Then she redesigned a model in the supersoft microfiber that felt like wearing nothing at all, but still offered excellent support even when her full figured DD sized friends tried it on. Now the fashion world is abuzz with Sassybax. It's been raved about by *The View*, *Good Morning America*, *CBS News* and *FOX News*. You may have read the great reviews in some prominent publications. The "before and after" video on *Good Morning America* was startling. The host was quoted as saying with Sassybax, "She's completely line free, all the lumps and bumps are gone, she looks terrific."

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for secretly wanting to make money on carbon reduction while appearing high-minded in public. True enough, but Strassel won't cut them an inch of slack: "At least when Big Pharma self-interestedly asks for fewer regulations, the economy benefits." Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, in *WSJ*-land, has no upside at all.

Aside from overt denialists, there are some important players who are MIA, such as the insurance industry. Back in the early 1990s, I attended a conference co-sponsored by that industry and Greenpeace. Greenpeace wanted to prod insurers into countering the weight of the denialist auto and oil industries. After all, the insurance companies will have to pay out larger claims as hurricanes and floods get more severe. At the time, their European counterparts, especially the reinsurance industry (which insures the insurance companies), worried aloud.

But the US insurance industry would hear none of it; it was interested only in tighter building codes, better computer modeling and inventing new financial instruments. Though they were too discreet to say it openly, their plan for climate change was either to jack up premiums or to stop writing new policies—thus Allstate has largely pulled out of Long Island.

What CEOs think and do is an urgent question. We may not have time for mass movements to force elites to do the right thing.

Nearly fifteen years later, little has changed. The US insurance industry is mainly concerned with technicalities, while the Europeans sound alarms. A 2006 paper from the Insurance Information Institute emphasizes scientific uncertainty about the relation between climate change and storm frequency and severity, notes that there's no simple relation between storms and industry profitability, comforts readers with praise of the industry's "resilience"—and reminds them that they can always jack up premiums in dangerous areas ("where places, things, and people are expensive to insure, insurance will be expensive").

By contrast, Swiss Re, the reinsurance giant, opened a 2002 paper on the topic by noting the necessity "to prevent global warming from accelerating to such [a] degree that humans are no longer able to adjust themselves in time," which they identified as "a task for governments and the community of states." A former consultant to the US insurance industry, who quit in disgust, told me that European insurers are "run by smart people who care about science" whose governments have been prodding them into action, while their American counterparts are "bottom-line hacks" whose government has been just fine with their indifference.

The *Wall Street Journal* editorialists have a point when they say that the corporate members of USCAP are better-positioned than their peers to make money from greenhouse gas reduction. GE, for example, which is busily touting its "Ecomagination" program, is poised to sell "clean coal" products, solar panels and even nuclear power plants. But short of a revolution, there's no imaginable way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions unless someone can make money off it.

It's painful for someone like me, who instinctively gravitates to the more radical position on most issues, to admit that the "better deal for business" is still a lot better than nothing. But it's worth examining the problems with their proposals, with the hope of agitating for something better. There's the simple point that Stern's and USCAP's emissions targets aren't ambitious enough. But there are also problems with their favorite strategy: cap-and-trade schemes.

These work by setting maximum emissions for polluting entities, be they individual factories or power plants or entire countries, based on historical baselines; these limits decline over time. Entities that come in under the limits are free to sell their remaining emissions rights to entities that can't make the limits. An early version of cap-and-trade was the 1990 domestic US agreement to limit acid-rain-causing sulfur dioxide emissions by coal-burning electric utilities. Cap-and-trade was at the core of the Kyoto Protocol: Individual countries were capped and then free to sell their credits, and countries themselves were expected to develop cap-and-trade systems for their own polluters. Despite US rejection of Kyoto, the European Union established a cap-and-trade system to meet its obligations under the protocol.

The record of these models is mixed: The acid-rain-reduction agreement is seen as fairly successful; sulfur dioxide emissions are more than a third below what they would have been without the program. But SO_2 emissions are mostly limited to power plants; by contrast, greenhouse gases come from millions of sources, from factories to lawn mowers, a more daunting administrative task.

The EU carbon scheme has had a less auspicious history. Launched at the beginning of 2005, some 12,000 installations were covered, responsible for about 45 percent of the Union's carbon dioxide emissions. Other greenhouse gases, and more installations, would be incorporated into the system in later phases. For the first sixteen months of the system, carbon permit prices more than tripled, only to collapse in April 2006 on the revelation that a number of countries had given their industries such generous caps that the industries were already in compliance and had no need to reduce emissions. This is just one of the problems with cap-and-trade schemes. Consider the burden of monitoring many thousands of sources—just what should their baseline emissions levels be, anyway? The temptation to cheat, to game the system, would be enormous. Already an entire industry has grown up around the trading system—analysts and brokers and traders who hope to make money from the scheme but contribute not much of anything to saving the planet. Also, cap-and-trade permit prices are tremendously volatile, more so even than the stock market. Volatility makes long-term planning very difficult.

A far better approach would be to tax carbon. A carbon tax would be simple—gasoline, coal and other fuels would be taxed based on their carbon content—and nearly impossible to evade. It could be introduced quickly, unlike the multiyear phase-in of the complicated EU cap-and-trade system. The tax rate could start low and then increase, to allow energy users to adjust. Unlike the market volatility of CO_2 and SO_2 permit prices, a carbon tax would be predictable, making it much easier for businesses and consumers to plan ahead. And as Charles

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Komanoff of the Carbon Tax Center argues, at least part of the proceeds of the tax could be rebated to poor and middle-income households through the income tax system, neutralizing any inequities. The unrebated balance could be used to subsidize alternative energy research and production. Given the historical successes of government funding of basic research in computing and medicine, there's every reason to believe the products of this work would be very promising.

But the corporate elite and their favorite enviros hate the thought of carbon taxes. (One exception: FPL, née Florida Power and Light, recently endorsed a carbon tax.) In a weird piece for the website Grist, ED's chief scientist, Bill Chameides, said that carbon tax advocates would give Congress a big pot of money to play with, which they'd use to subsidize their favorite technologies in pork-barrel fashion. Sounding like he was reading from GOP talking points, Chameides declared, "History has shown that the marketplace does a better job of developing new technologies, and a tax takes money out of the marketplace."

In fact, that sort of ideology ignores history, which is replete with examples of market failure and cases of state support in crucial economic and technological development. The point of a carbon tax is to raise the cost of energy, seriously, and encourage people to use less of it while developing new, carbon-free sources. And the idea that Congress wouldn't be tempted to play favorites with a massive carbon permit scheme is surreal.

That brings us to the crux of the problem: Raising the cost of energy means big changes in the way we live. Corporate-friendly enviros don't like to hear that. In an interview, NRDC's global warming czar, David Hawkins, denied that sacrifice would be necessary—because as-yet-unrevealed technological breakthroughs will allow us to gorge on energy and everything else. The investor and business coalition speaks confidently of "win-win" changes.

But the sailing might not be so smooth. Though advocates of cap-and-trade, like Hawkins, deny this, they seem seduced by a set-and-forget appeal to the technique. If, by some currently near-unimaginable miracle, serious restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions were enacted, it might not look like win-win. Few things annoy Americans more than higher energy prices, or being forced to take the train instead of the Escalade.

For people on the left, it's hard to parse the politics of the climate issue. We're used to a world in which business interests and their favorite politicians will do the right thing only if they're forced to by popular mobilization. That's not true of the climate issue: Though there are activists seriously devoted to the cause, it's a long way from being the foremost concern of millions. So it's tempting to look at the latest elite mobilization as something that could get a head start on avoiding catastrophe while we hope for more action from below. But you really have to wonder how serious these freshly mobilized business interests are. Can we trust them? Do we have any choice? ■

Adapt or Die

BANGLADESH AND NEW ORLEANS FACE A STARK CHOICE.

BY MARK HERTSGAARD

Anisur Rahman is the mayor of a village that is literally disappearing beneath his feet. He knows how this is happening but not why. His village, Antarpara, used to straddle one of the great rivers of Asia, the Brahmaputra. Like the Ganges, the Brahmaputra originates as snow melt in the Himalayas before pouring down through the low plain that is Bangladesh to the Indian Ocean. Centuries of practice have taught people how to cope with the annual flooding of the Brahmaputra. They even welcome it, despite the foot or more of water it sometimes leaves in their huts, because without it their lands would be less fertile.

But things are different now. "This river comes from India," says the mayor as we look out at the muddy water. "For some reason, the water in India is increasing, so the floods here are bigger. The floods are sweeping away our houses, even the land beneath them. There were 239 families in this village before. Now we are thirty-eight families."

Clustered around us are dozens of villagers, mainly women in cheap, bright saris—lime green, sky blue, scarlet—with children clinging to their necks. "I have had to move my house seven times in the last twenty-eight years," says Charna, a mother of two. "I used to live over there," she says, pointing toward the middle of the river, "but floods washed the land away and I had to move here." But there is little room here either. Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the world; its 150 million people—half the size of the US population—are crammed into an area about as large as Iowa. "We don't even have land for a graveyard," Charna laments.

Turning to say goodbye, I find that the mayor is holding a baby—his 18-month-old daughter. She is a pretty if solemn-faced girl and, yes, he definitely wants her to go to school one day. But it won't be in Antarpara. "By the time she is old enough," he says, "this village won't be here."

Halfway around the world, Beverly Wright is wondering how long her hometown of New Orleans will still be here, at least in a recognizable form. Wright, who can trace her family line back through eight generations of free blacks, used to live in New Orleans East, one of the neighborhoods hardest hit by the flooding from Hurricane Katrina. Her house took on eight feet of water; only now, twenty months later, is it almost ready

Mark Hertsgaard, The Nation*'s environment correspondent, is the author of many books, including* Living Through the Storm: Our Future Under Global Warming*, forthcoming from Houghton Mifflin.*
Research support provided by the Center for Investigative Reporting.

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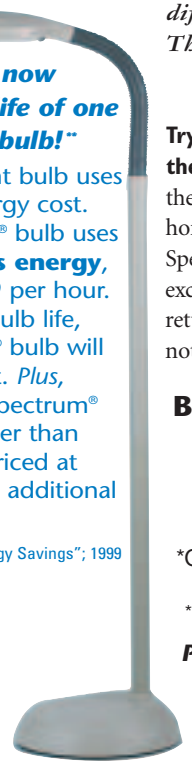

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for her to live in again.

Elsewhere in New Orleans East, one can still drive past block after block after block of empty, wrecked buildings. The same is true in the Lower Ninth Ward and other parts of the city. While Katrina also devastated mainly white areas such as Lakeview, it is the city's former black majority, and its poor, who are having the hardest time returning home. "Most people want to come back to New Orleans, but they can't," Wright tells me. "They don't have jobs or a place to live, and there is no money coming from the federal government." Only 2 percent of those eligible for federal resettlement payments have received checks, according to a study by the Brookings Institution.

Beyond the city's changing complexion, Wright also fears its vulnerability to hurricanes. As the director of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, at Dillard University, she knows that scientists expect hurricanes to become stronger as global warming intensifies in the years ahead. Will New Orleans be better prepared next time?

The Army Corps of Engineers has reworked some of the levees that failed after Katrina, but the job remains flawed and marred by scandal: The Corps admits having knowingly installed defective pumps manufactured by Moving Water Industries, a company headed by J. David Eller, a former business partner and major campaign contributor to George W. Bush's brother Jeb. Meanwhile, Louisiana's wetlands, which play a crucial role in hurricane protection—wetlands act like speed bumps to weaken a storm surge before it reaches inland—remain in tatters, thanks to Katrina's wrath and decades of imprudent development and oil drilling.

Global warming was caused by the rich world's greenhouse gas emissions, but it tends to punish the poor first and worst.

It doesn't have to be this way, Wright insists. "If we are vigilant, we could make New Orleans into the safest coastal city in the world and use it as a model to help the rest of the country prepare for global warming."

But is that true? Is it really possible to protect New Orleans, much of which lies below sea level, from the one- to three-foot rise in sea level that, according to scientists, global warming will likely cause? And what about Bangladesh? How does one climate-proof a low-lying country that, like New Orleans, is threatened not only by sea level rise but also by flooding from two directions—from rivers behind it and a tropical ocean before it? Even if such protection is technically achievable, how much will it cost? And who will pay for it?

New Orleans, like Bangladesh, will be looked back on as one of the first great casualties of climate change. Not because global warming can definitively be blamed for Katrina or the Bangladesh floods; the earth's weather system is too complex to attribute any one event to a single cause. But these events fit a larger pattern: Extra-strong hurricanes and floods are exactly what scientists expect to see—along with fiercer heat waves, harsher droughts, heavier rains and inexorable sea level rise—as global warming intensifies in the years to come.

Bangladesh and New Orleans thus offer a glimpse of the global warming future all humanity is entering. They also illustrate the terrible injustice at the heart of the crisis: Global warming was caused by the rich world's greenhouse gas emissions over the past two centuries, but it tends to punish the poor of today first and worst. This historical reality has given rise to calls for what amount to climate change reparations.

"Poor countries and poor communities in all countries are bearing the brunt of a problem that was caused by the rich, so the rich must pay to help them adapt," says Saleemul Huq, a Bangladeshi who directs the climate change group at the International Institute for Environment and Development in London.

New Orleans and Bangladesh also illuminate another, less recognized truth about global warming: As the scientific report released April 6 in Brussels by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) makes clear, global warming is going to get worse, perhaps a lot worse, before it gets better. The momentum of the climate system—the fact that carbon dioxide remains in the atmosphere for decades, while oceans store heat for centuries—insures that no matter how much humanity cuts future emissions, our previous emissions will keep warming the planet for decades to come.

We have thus entered a new era of global warming, and our paradigm for confronting it must change accordingly. What scientists call *mitigation*—reducing the greenhouse emissions that cause the warming—must intensify; the longer we wait to make the 80 percent cuts that are required, the hotter and stormier our future will be. But we must also mount a new effort at *adaptation*—preparing people, institutions and ecosystems against the more violent climate our past emissions have set in motion.

Few countries have yet taken this lesson to heart. Topping a short list are Britain and the Netherlands, which are each spending about $1 billion a year to upgrade their defenses against flooding. The Dutch have even devised a slogan for their efforts—"We Are Here to Stay"—to reassure foreign tourists and investors they should keep on coming.

Bangladesh, though poor, has also taken some steps. "Bangladesh has a very effective notification and evacuation system against floods," says Huq. "In the big flood of 2004, 30 to 40 percent of the country was inundated and millions of people were displaced, but only 200 to 300 died. That's because people knew about the flood—from the government, the media, NGOs—and they moved. Compare that with Haiti, which was hit by a hurricane that same year. Haiti lost more than 2,000 people, from a much smaller population."

But Bangladesh's poverty precludes it from making the kind of large-scale investments necessary. Madeleen Helmer, a Dutch environmentalist, has convinced the Red Cross to include climate change on its agenda, for the simple reason that climate change promises to increase the severity of the disasters the Red Cross responds to. Helmer sees a gross injustice in the fact that "my own country is spending over a billion dollars a year to protect itself, but Bangladesh, which faces threats at least as great but had no role in creating this problem, has nowhere near this kind of money."

The principle of climate change reparations is already part of

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international law, at least in theory. Rich countries that have ratified the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change—a group that includes the United States, though it shuns the convention's 1997 Kyoto Protocol—are legally obliged to fund adaptation efforts in vulnerable developing countries. However, notes Huq, "the few hundred million dollars pledged so far is a tiny fraction of the tens of billions of dollars needed." That shortfall must be corrected if we are to avoid massive human suffering and perhaps social collapse as global warming intensifies.

In the United States, the government has the money but not the will to pursue adaptation. "You can't adapt to a problem you don't admit exists," says Richard Klein of the Stockholm Environment Institute, a co-author of the April IPCC report who speaks here only for himself. The Bush Administration killed the number-one tool for pursuing adaptation: The National Assessment of Climate Change, an analysis begun in 1990 of the vulnerabilities of various regions of the country and strategies for coping with them.

The real proof of Washington's indifference is on the ground in New Orleans. Rhetorically, both the White House and Congress support Category 5 hurricane protection for New Orleans. But not a dime has actually been authorized, much less spent, to implement that goal, says Mark Davis, professor of environmental law at Tulane University. "It's a bit like declaring that we're committed to victory in Iraq but then not following through with the funds needed to do the job," Davis says.

Combine inadequate hurricane protection with incompetent at best recovery policies and the conclusion seems clear: America is leaving one of its great cities wounded on the battlefield. Foreigners recognize this truth, even if many Americans don't.

Hassan Mashriqui, who was born in Bangladesh, is a scholar at the LSU Hurricane Center. Since Katrina, when friends and family from Bangladesh visit him, Mashriqui always gives them a tour of the city. Afterward, he recalls, "they would say to me, 'Even Bangladesh, as poor as we are, would have rebuilt by now if one of our crown jewel cities had been hit. This is the United States of America! You sent a man to the moon, you're spending a trillion dollars on the Iraq War, yet you won't rebuild one of your most important cities?' They don't understand it."

There is, of course, no guarantee that New Orleans or anywhere else can successfully adapt to all that global warming throws at us. If the earth undergoes what scientists call nonlinear climate change—for example, if ice sheets melt so fast that sea levels rise twenty feet in 100 years—all bets are off; it's hard to see that much of today's population could survive such cataclysmic transformations. That is why the essential new focus on adaptation must not diminish the pre-existing—and now growing—focus on mitigation.

At this point we must accept that the battle to prevent global warming is over; now, the race to survive it has begun. This race will continue for the rest of our lives, testing human ingenuity, institutions and values as never before. Losses are inevitable, but the situation is not hopeless. We know much of what needs to be done, and we have considerable resources at our disposal. There is rough weather ahead, but if we keep our heads and stick together, we may find ways of living through the storm. ■

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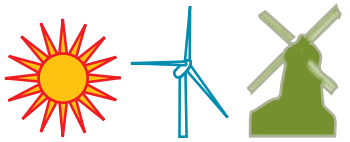

HUNTERS FEEL THE HEAT IN GWICH'IN COUNTRY.

BY MATTHEW GILBERT

Gwich'in elders long ago predicted that a day would come when the world would warm, and things would not be the same with the animals. That time is now.

My tribe, the Gwich'in of northeastern Alaska and northwestern Canada, are the northernmost Indian nation on the American continent. Our 8,000 tribal members live in fifteen small villages dotted across a huge area of subarctic tundra and forest scattered with thousands of lakes and scores of rivers. Our home is also home to the Porcupine River Caribou Herd. For as long as anyone can remember, we have survived by hunting caribou. Despite the introduction of rifles, Christianity, a few snowmobiles and some electricity, we still make our living from subsistence hunting.

Now climate change has put our lives and livelihoods in immediate danger: The lakes, the rivers, the waterfowl and, most of all, the caribou that we depend on are under threat.

Because nature is the fabric of our lives, we cannot really separate "the climate" from our human selves. So when we talk about the environment and especially about the decline of caribou, we are talking about who we are and who we want to continue to be. It is a question of our very survival as a people.

Not far from Gwich'in land is the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coastal plain. Potential oil and gas development there would further stress the caribou and fuel more greenhouse gas emissions, which would cause even more, very bad changes down the line. That is why we oppose plans to drill for oil there.

The biggest impact from climate change that we have seen recently has been two immense forest fires that laid waste millions of acres—more than 6 million acres in 2004 and 4 million acres in 2005. When the giant fires of the Yukon Flats started in the summer of 2004, the marten were driven up to Arctic Village, north of their natural territories. Gwich'in, who trap the marten, are finding them scarce, and that means loss of fur for clothing and cash income from the sale of marten pelts.

We are even seeing a decline in snowfall to the point that it is making travel by sled and snowmobile difficult. Warmer weather means that creeks are taking longer to freeze, and when they do the ice is often too thin to hold heavy loads. This means that getting firewood in the early winter is becoming very difficult and dangerous.

Worst of all are the problems faced by the massive Porcupine River Caribou Herd. We rely on these animals for much of our food; their numbers used to be 178,000, but they have dropped to 129,000 in a mere decade. Calf mortality has risen because of unstable environmental conditions. In 2000 and 2001 the Porcupine River thawed early. This was extremely serious, because it forced the pregnant cows to give birth south of the river rather than in their normal birthing grounds and summer pastures.

But the caribou's instinct to go north to the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is so strong that the cows then persisted in crossing the rushing water. Thousands of calves drowned as a result. A tragedy in itself, this also threatens our lives and culture.

The caribou's migration route has also been changing over the past thirty years. We have noticed how the herd is not as plentiful around Arctic Village as it was thirty years ago. My grandfather remembers vast numbers of caribou moving in waves near the village during the spring and summer. The herd was seeking shelter on glaciers and pockets of snow in the mountains. Those places are critical to the survival of newborn caribou: Mothers and calves rest on these cold spots to avoid voracious predatory insects that can kill the little calves. But now those spots have all disappeared. Since the ice and snow are gone in these pockets, the herd has had to move north of their usual area. Now they try to stay near the Brooks Range for its more plentiful snow, ice and water.

With the herd shifting north, it's getting harder and harder for the hunters to locate them, and we find it much more difficult to provide for our families. Instead of being able to complete provisioning before the harshness of winter arrives, we have had to wait until winter so we can cross rivers and find hard snow surfaces. And not only is the herd smaller but the caribou are generally not as healthy.

The permafrost is melting everywhere and this is having a devastating effect on the Chandalar, Porcupine and Yukon rivers: All three are getting very low.

It sounds contradictory to say that melting permafrost diminishes rivers, but the underground ice, the permafrost, held the water and regulated its flow. Only small amounts would melt gradually into the rivers. Now that the permafrost is melting, the water runs off quickly, washing away instead of trickling slowly through the filter of partially frozen ground. That leaves the rivers lower much sooner in the summer.

Water levels in the Chandalar River are so low that local moose hunters, who used to go upriver some twenty miles past Grandfather Mountain to hunt, now cannot. Gwich'in from the Yukon Flats travel to Old Crow, Canada, by river, but now they have to drag their boats in a lot of places because the water is so low.

Lakes are especially important to the Gwich'in diet because they have abundant wildlife. But these lakes are drying out. We have noticed that there is a definite decline in numbers of white-

Matthew Gilbert resides in Arctic Village, where he was raised by his grandparents, Reverend Trimble and Mary Gilbert. He earned a BA at the University of Alaska and recently completed a fellowship for the National Wildlife Federation documenting Gwich'in traditional knowledge on global warming.

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A life-long student of these issues, Professor Robinson is a Philosophy Faculty Member at Oxford University and a distinguished Research Professor, Emeritus, at Georgetown University. He has published well over a dozen books on a remarkable range of subjects, including the connection between his two specialties, philosophy and psychology, and aesthetics, politics, and human nature.

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fish, for example. Whitefish used to be the most common kind of fish, but they're getting scarce and we hardly make the winter harvest anymore. Because the fish feed on water plants all year long, they provide good nutrition from the waters to help us during a long winter without fresh produce.

Global warming is affecting every facet of Gwich'in life. The Gwich'in elders saw it coming, a time when the weather would warm and change. The elders even foretold the problem of stratospheric ozone depletion. They had a name for what scientists call the ozone layer. In Gwich'in we call the shield against the sun's harsh rays "Zhee vee Luu." The elders knew something was happening to it. And just as the old stories were telling us: The climate is changing and the animals are changing their movements.

In 1988, at our first Gwich'in Gathering in 100 years, Gwich'in elders directed us to educate the world about the threats posed by oil and gas development in the calving and nursery grounds of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Now our whole way of life is threatened by global warming.

As Sarah James, Gwich'in Steering Committee spokesperson, has stated: "Protection of the refuge should not be treated as a separate issue from climate change. Let us connect Arctic Refuge with global warming. Drilling for more oil and burning it will contribute to climate change." We need solutions in our local communities, nationally and internationally to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that threaten not just us, here in the far North, but all cultures everywhere. ■

China vs. Earth

SEARCHING FOR A GREEN PATH TO GROWTH.

BY ELIZABETH ECONOMY

The message is clear: Shanghai under water, Tibetan glaciers disappearing, crop yields in precipitous decline, epidemics flaring. These are just some of the dire consequences that Chinese scientists predict for their country this century if current climate change is not addressed. Yet China's leaders pay about as much attention to the issue as does George W. Bush. In fact, a report issued last year by the Climate Action Network–Europe ranks China fifty-fourth out of fifty-six countries for its climate change response, just behind the United States and ahead only of Malaysia and Saudi Arabia.

Beijing knows the costs of inaction: A recent major official study on climate change predicts up to a 37 percent decline in China's wheat, rice and corn yields in the second half of the century. Precipitation may decline by as much as 30 percent in three of China's seven major river regions: the Huai, Liao and Hai. The Yellow and Yangtze rivers, which support the richest agricultural regions of the country and derive much of their water from Tibetan glaciers, will initially experience floods and then drought as the glaciers melt.

Moreover, a one-meter rise in sea level will submerge an area the size of Portugal along China's eastern seaboard—home to more than half the country's population and 60 percent of its economic output. Already climate change–related extreme weather is taking its toll: In 2006 such disasters cost China more than $25 billion in damage. Finally, a study by Shanghai-based researcher Wen Jiahong suggests that the lethal H5N1 virus will spread as climate change shifts the habitats and migratory patterns of birds.

Yet China's leaders show little inclination to move aggressively to forestall such calamities. As a result of China's reliance on coal to fuel its economy, its emissions of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide have tripled over the past thirty years and are now second only to those of the United States. In late 2006 the International Energy Agency predicted that China would surpass the United States as the largest contributor of CO_2 by 2009, a full decade earlier than anticipated. China already uses more coal than the United States, the European Union and Japan combined and is the world's second-largest consumer of oil after the United States. (India, which lags well behind China in its overall consumption of coal, is nonetheless on track to become a major CO_2 contributor over the next ten years and is already the fifth-largest contributor of greenhouse gases globally.)

China's development strategy suggests that little will change in the foreseeable future. With plans on the books to urbanize half the Chinese population by 2020, energy consumption will soar. City residents in China use 250 percent more power than their rural counterparts. And China's love affair with the private car is set to rival that of the United States. A conservative estimate by the Asian Development Bank predicts that the number of cars in China could increase by fifteen times present levels over the next thirty years, more than tripling CO_2 emissions.

If China's development trajectory continues as planned, its increase in greenhouse gas emissions will likely *exceed that of all industrialized countries combined over the next twenty-five years*, surpassing by five times the reduction in such emissions that the Kyoto Protocol sought. In short, it's a nightmarishly bad picture.

It would be unfair, however, to characterize China as doing nothing to address climate change. The leadership's worries about both energy security and domestic air pollution—five of the world's ten most polluted cities are in China—are propel-

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ling them to set bold targets for reshaping their energy mix and enhancing energy efficiency.

The Chinese government has called for renewable energy to provide 10 percent of the nation's power by 2010 and 15 percent by 2020. Key state-owned enterprises and provincial governors must make 20 percent reductions in their energy intensity (that is, energy consumed per unit of GDP) over the next three years. On that front there is a lot of room for improvement: China's buildings consume 250 percent more energy than buildings in other countries with comparable climates. Beijing has responded with a raft of tough new building codes for energy efficiency. Much like the United States, cities and provinces are now taking matters into their own hands. Shenzhen, for example, has passed a regulation that solar power be used to supply hot water in all new residential buildings under twelve stories.

Already there is some success. With the assistance of the US-based Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), China built its first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified building. Fittingly, the building houses the Ministry of Science and Technology, in Beijing. Ten stories tall, it uses 70 percent less energy than similar buildings and saves 10,000 tons of water annually through rainwater collection. NRDC energy expert Robert Watson, one of the chief architects of the project, claims that if every new nonresidential building in China matched this one, the electricity savings would equal the amount of energy provided by the Three Gorges Dam.

One of the West's great misconceptions is that what Beijing says goes. In fact, local officials often pursue their own agendas.

But China is littered with well-intended demonstration projects that go nowhere. If these new regulations are to have an impact, Beijing's tough rhetoric must be matched by real enforcement, a task that has proved elusive in the past. In 2002 the Chinese government pledged to cut sulfur dioxide 10 percent by 2005. (SO_2 is not a greenhouse gas but is a noxious byproduct of coal power that causes acid rain and urban smog; getting rid of it is a good idea.) But SO_2 emissions have increased 27 percent. From all accounts, few if any of the coal-fired power plants that China is bringing online almost every week embrace state-of-the-art clean technology. Moreover, Beijing has already missed its first-year target for the 2006–10 plan to increase the energy efficiency of industry.

Why can't this supposed command economy impose solutions if its leadership sees a problem? There are several reasons behind China's consistent failure to meet environmental goals.

First, the central government in Beijing actually has little on-the-ground enforcement capability in the provinces. Local environmental protection officials report to and are beholden to local government officials, not to the State Environmental Protection Administration in Beijing. One of the West's great misconceptions is that what Beijing says goes. In fact, local officials are often in cahoots with factory managers and allow industry to pollute well above legal limits—either because the officials have a financial stake in the enterprise or because they are afraid that closing a factory, or making it more expensive to operate, will diminish local employment and lead to social unrest, which is now a very serious problem all across China.

In other cases, local officials want to do the right thing but are too weak in the face of powerful enterprise managers.

At root, however, China's lax environmental enforcement results from Beijing's failure to create a system of green-oriented incentives and penalties. Pricing of natural resources, pollution levies and promotion incentives for officials should all be geared toward environmental protection. Instead, growth at all costs is the guiding logic. Moreover, China's leaders are afraid to unleash civil society, in the form of the media, the legal system and NGOs, to help hold local officials accountable for wrongdoing. Already there are tens of thousands of mass demonstrations over environmental pollution every year. Officials fear that opposition demands will escalate out of control, unleashing a far more powerful push for broader political reform. So the government relies on its old methods, limiting transparency, accountability and free expression.

On the international stage, China faces pressure and incentives to become more environmentally responsible. Beijing's interest in promoting energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy resources—as well as a desire to be perceived as a constructive global actor—drove China's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. And China has become an active player in the Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), tapping into opportunities for technology transfer and international investment. China already has some seventy CDM projects under way—well over half of which supply foreign investment and/or technology for renewable energy projects. According to an Asian Development Bank expert, China could generate an annual revenue stream of more than $2 billion by participating in externally funded CDM projects.

But without more substantial commitment to meet real targets for radical emissions reductions, China's greenhouse contributions will overwhelm its best efforts.

If there is a meaningful Chinese discussion about tackling climate change, it takes place largely behind closed doors, well out of sight of foreigners. Perhaps recent natural disasters will motivate Chinese leaders: Over just the past year China has suffered floods in the east that have affected more than 10 million people, while drought this spring left 13 million people and 12 million farm animals without enough drinking water.

The Communist Party's argument over the past fifteen years has been: Since China came late to the industrialization game, the core economies, with their significantly greater historical greenhouse gas contributions, must pay for a global transformation away from fossil fuels. Now it is China's turn to develop, so deal with it.

"Development is the first urgent task," said Qin Dahe, a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and co-chair of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. "It's a firm principle and, moreover, we need good and fast development. Only then will we be able to step by step solve the problem" of climate change. Chinese officials are also quick

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to point out that on a per capita basis, China's greenhouse gas emissions are dwarfed by those of the developed countries: Per capita discharge is only 61 percent of the world's average and 21 percent of that of OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries.

A more subtle indication of how China's leaders understand the global climate change regime is revealed by the regulatory framework China has established for the Kyoto-related CDM projects. In essence, Beijing places a higher priority on projects that contribute to the development of the economy and transfer technology to China than on projects that make reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

When growth and green can be accomplished together, the Chinese government embraces environmentalism. For example, it actively discriminates in favor of CDM proposals that transfer technology and advance the country's capacity in renewables, energy efficiency and methane recovery. But reforestation projects or projects that propose to reduce emissions of HFC-23—a greenhouse gas with global warming potential more than 11,000 times that of CO_2—are discouraged because they do not involve enough capital or provide technology transfer. Working within these confines, the Kyoto-related CDM framework offers important ways for OECD countries to nudge China away from fossil fuels.

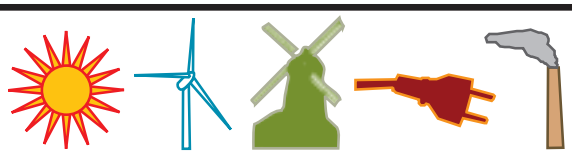
Paradoxically, another reason climate change is not a bigger issue in China has to do with local pollution. Anyone who has visited an inland Chinese city knows how terrifyingly bad the air is. Chinese media are replete with horrifying statistics: An estimated 400,000 people die prematurely from respiratory diseases related to air pollution each year; one-quarter of China's land is desert, and the desert is advancing at the rate of 1,900 square miles per year, producing tens of thousands of environmental migrants; and in China's north and west, severe and growing water scarcity is impinging on economic growth, limiting agricultural and industrial output. As a result even the burgeoning environmental nongovernmental sector in China discusses climate change only as an afterthought. Strangely, few outside the scientific community make the connection that climate change may be exacerbating and exacerbated by these "domestic" problems.

The world's most industrialized countries started the climate crisis, but China might well finish the job. Not having China on board for a more stringent post-Kyoto accord is simply not an option.

In late April the Chinese government is expected to release a national plan on global climate change. From all accounts, the document will reinforce the government's commitment to energy efficiency and renewables while also setting forth prevention policies for natural disasters. What it will not do, unsurprisingly, is embrace any targets or timetables for greenhouse gas emission reductions. For that to happen, two things are necessary. First, the United States, preferably with Australia and India in tow, must agree to aggressive emission reductions, perhaps along the lines currently pursued by California. Without a strong US commitment, the international community has no credibility in pressuring the Chinese.

Second, OECD countries will have to be far more generous and comprehensive in compensating China in its struggle to enforce tougher energy efficiency and renewable standards. That can be done with both financial incentives and technology transfers. What finally brought the Chinese on board with Kyoto and previous international environmental agreements was the attraction of getting paid to do the right thing. If the United States joins the fight against climate change—and if the price is right—there is every reason to believe that China can commit to doing the right thing again. ■

The Dirty Rock



CAN COAL CLEAN UP ITS ACT?

BY JEFF GOODELL

Coal is the most carbon-intensive of all fossil fuels: For every ton you burn, three tons of carbon dioxide are created. As everyone knows, CO_2 is the main greenhouse gas responsible for heating up the planet. Globally, coal is responsible for about 40 percent of all CO_2 emissions. In America we burn more than a billion tons of coal a year, mostly to generate electricity. A big coal-fired power plant typically emits as much CO_2 in a single year as a million SUVs. China burns nearly twice as much coal as we do (although less than half as much per capita) and is erecting a new coal plant every ten days. In addition, rising oil prices are boosting demand for plants that can transform coal into liquid fuels like diesel. If the world's appetite for coal continues unabated, the consequences are easy to predict: We're cooked.

Fortunately, there's a technological solution on the horizon. It's called carbon capture and storage. On paper, it sounds simple. As coal is burned, remove the CO_2 with a scrubber or other device, pressurize it into a supercritical liquid that's roughly the consistency of oil, then pump it underground. Depleted oil and gas wells make good storage sites, as do deep saline aquifers 2,000 feet or so underground. You can even pipe the CO_2 offshore and inject it under the ocean floor. In theory, the CO_2 will stay buried in these spots for thousands of years, thereby allowing us to continue burning coal without trashing the earth's climate. Indeed, the promise of this technology is at the heart of every

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discussion about "clean coal" these days, as well as the Bush Administration's FutureGen initiative, the $1.7 billion coal plant the Energy Department is building in partnership with a dozen or so electric power and coal companies. FutureGen, which will convert coal into electricity and hydrogen, the much-hyped fuel of the future, is scheduled to go online in 2012 (although there are doubters—within the power industry, it's dubbed by some as "NeverGen"). Politically the point of FutureGen is to make clear that this dirty black rock—the very symbol of nineteenth-century industrialism—can be spiffed up for the twenty-first century.

It's a hopeful story, and one that any 2008 presidential candidate who wants to carry Big Coal swing states like Illinois, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Wyoming and Ohio is sure to embrace. And why not? It would certainly make America's energy problems easier to solve if "clean coal" was more than a PR slogan. As high-profile, politically ambitious coal boosters like Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer never tire of pointing out, America is "the Saudi Arabia of coal." Oil wells in the Middle East may be running dry, but America is blessed with a 250-year supply of black rocks (at current rates of consumption—and never mind the environmental havoc caused by getting that coal out of the ground). If the CO_2 problem can be solved, the argument goes, energy independence won't be far behind.

Until a significant cost is attached to dumping greenhouse gases, no corporation will go to the trouble of burying much carbon dioxide.

Unfortunately, this story is more complex than the coal boosters suggest. Squirting CO_2 into old oil wells is no big deal—the oil and gas industry does it all the time to help push out stubborn reserves. But capturing billions of tons of CO_2 from power plants and pumping it underground—and doing it safely, on a massive global scale, both in the West and the developing world—is another thing altogether. And the politics of this undertaking is even more daunting than the technology. Big Coal is an industry that has thrived for 100 years by fighting off change, isolating itself from market forces and generally depending on political muscle to get its way. The notion that this industry will embrace this challenge is akin to believing your 70-year-old gin-splattered uncle when he tells you he's taken his last drink. Getting him to sober up can be done, but it requires radical intervention.

The technological issues involved with capturing and storing CO_2 are not trivial. Unlike other pollutants, like sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, which are relatively easy to remove with a scrubber on the smokestack of a pulverized-coal plant, CO_2 emerges in a diffuse stream that's difficult to filter. In fact, nobody has figured out a good way to capture CO_2 from a smokestack that isn't prohibitively expensive and doesn't reduce the efficiency of the plant by as much as 30 percent. Other possibilities, such as burning the coal in pure oxygen, may someday make the job of capturing CO_2 easier, but this technology is nowhere near ready for prime time.

It's more likely that capturing CO_2 will require shifting to an entirely new kind of plant, called IGCC, or "integrated gasification combined cycle," which uses heat and pressure to transform coal into a synthetic gas that can then be burned to generate power. The advantages of IGCC are many, including the fact that CO_2 can be removed during the gasification process, when the volume of the gas is much smaller than it is when it is released up the stack of a conventional coal plant. The disadvantage of IGCC is that it is new and different, and this is an industry that fights anything new and different. In any case, the important point is that the ability to capture CO_2 is likely to apply only to new coal plants. Retrofitting the thousands of existing coal plants is a pipe dream. If and when the world gets serious about dealing with global warming, these plants will likely have to be bulldozed.

For the sake of argument, however, let's assume a brilliant entrepreneur invents a cheap, efficient way to capture CO_2 from existing coal plants (lots of people are working on it). And let's put aside the fact that before it can be buried, the CO_2 must be compressed into a supercritical fluid—not hard to do, but the process can use up to 10 percent of the energy created by burning the coal in the first place. The important question is: Can we bury enough to make a difference?

According to the popular "wedge theory" of Princeton professors Stephen Pacala and Robert Socolow, capturing and burying 1 billion tons of carbon from coal plants by 2050 would contribute one-seventh of the reduction they estimate we need to achieve to stabilize the earth's climate. One billion tons of carbon is equivalent to 3.6 billion tons of CO_2, or more than twice the annual CO_2 emissions from coal plants in America today. What would it mean to capture and bury 3.6 billion tons of CO_2?

There are three carbon capture and storage projects in operation in the world right now (all are used for enhanced oil and gas recovery; storing the CO_2 is secondary). The most significant is in Sleipner, Norway, where Statoil has been pumping 1 million tons of CO_2 into a reservoir beneath the North Sea each year since 1996. It is an enormous engineering project, deploying one of the largest offshore platforms in the world. But compared with the engineering effort that would be required to stabilize the climate, it's inconsequential. It would take ten Sleipner-size CO_2 storage projects to offset the annual emissions of a single large coal plant.

Lynn Orr, a petroleum engineer who directs the Global Climate and Energy Project at Stanford University, estimates that to store a billion tons of carbon underground, the total inflow of CO_2 would be roughly equal to the total outflow of oil and gas today. The magnitude of the engineering challenge is not necessarily an argument against doing it. But it is an argument against seeing underground carbon storage as a simple, easy solution to CO_2 emissions from coal.

It's unlikely anyone will be laying thousands of miles of CO_2 pipelines anytime soon, however. Until a significant cost is attached to dumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, no corporation will go to the trouble and expense of burying much CO_2. In the United States most studies suggest that until the price hits $25 to $30 per ton of CO_2 emitted (either through a straight carbon tax or a market-based cap-and-trade program similar to the one now used to reduce sulfur dioxide emissions from coal

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plants), power companies will find it cheaper to continue dumping CO_2 into the atmosphere than to try to capture and bury it.

Not surprisingly, for the past two decades Big Coal has worked hard to deny the existence of global warming and to undermine any legislation that would put a price on carbon. Today, even the dinosaurs of the industry know that carbon legislation is inevitable; the game now is to delay legislation and to make sure that when it does pass, the cost of carbon stays as low as possible for as long as possible. So get ready for years of talk about the promise of carbon capture and storage but very little action.

In fact, the prospect of carbon legislation has created a perverse incentive for big power companies like Dynegy and Wisconsin Energy to throw up another generation of old-style coal burners that offer little hope of ever capturing and burying CO_2. The companies are betting that with the help of a little muscle in Washington, the emissions of these new plants will be grandfathered in by coming legislation. That loophole is relatively easy for Congress to close, however.

Far more complex is figuring out a policy that will drive power companies to begin capturing and storing CO_2 in the decade or so before high carbon prices kick in. David Hawkins, director of the climate center for the Natural Resources Defense Council, advocates the creation of a CO_2 emissions standard for coal plants, arguing that such a standard, modeled on a measure passed last year in California requiring electricity generators to meet the state's goals for CO_2 reductions, could be implemented quickly and would push coal burners to experiment with capture and storage today.

Retrofitting the thousands of existing coal plants is a pipe dream. These plants will likely have to be bulldozed.

Big Coal has good reason to fear a crackdown on CO_2. Coal's ace in the hole has always been that it's cheap. Of course, coal is cheap in the same way that fast food is cheap—because all the health and environmental costs are offloaded onto the public and not included in the bottom line. But when a price tag is attached to CO_2 emissions, that calculation will change. A new study from MIT estimates that deploying carbon capture and storage will raise the wholesale price of electricity from new coal plants by 50 percent (this may be a conservative estimate—other studies have put the price nearly twice as high). If the price of coal-fired power increases 50 percent, a lot of people will ask, Why bother?

Venture capitalist Vinod Khosla, who is leading Silicon Valley's charge into clean energy, believes the balance toward renewables is shifting quickly. "I think we're at the beginning of a whole new innovation cycle," says Khosla, adding, "If you're a rational financial investor, and you did your homework, you wouldn't fund a coal plant."

The real wild card in this whole scenario, however, may be public opinion. Most Americans have never heard of underground CO_2 storage, and it's far from clear how they will feel about living above giant pools of CO_2. The liquefied carbon gas is buoyant underground and can migrate through cracks in the earth and around old well heads, pooling in unexpected places. This is troublesome because CO_2 is an asphyxiant—in concentrations above 20 percent it can cause a person to lose consciousness in a breath or two. At Mammoth Mountain, California, where CO_2 naturally seeps up through the ground, skiers have died when they tumbled into CO_2 pockets that had built up in hollows in the snow. In theory, you could enter a basement flooded with CO_2 and because it's an invisible, odorless gas, you wouldn't know it was there. Also there's the slight but not insignificant risk of a geyserlike eruption of CO_2 from an underground storage facility, which in a populated area could be devastating.

Another public health concern is the release of toxic heavy metals. When CO_2 is pumped into underground aquifers, it makes the water more acidic. Acidic water dissolves certain types of rocks, releasing minerals and nasty stuff like arsenic and uranium, which can then seep into drinking water.

Who will be the carbon police? For power companies CO_2 is waste, and capturing and burying it is nothing more than high-tech garbage dumping. They will obviously be interested in getting rid of it as cheaply as possible. Given the coal and electric power industry's history of regulatory abuse, making sure this is done safely and responsibly is going to require a new breed of watchdog. A related issue—and one that I've heard raised by a number of power industry CEOs—is liability. If a micro-seep of CO_2 asphyxiates five girls having a slumber party in a basement in Illinois, who is going to be held accountable? Monitoring and verifying the integrity of CO_2 storage is also important from the standpoint of actually solving the problem of global warming—what's the point of going to the trouble and expense of pumping CO_2 underground if it seeps back out a year later? Even tiny leaks undermine the value of burying carbon; some experts estimate that an annual leakage rate of 1 percent could add $850 billion per year to overall costs by 2095. On small-scale pilot projects, seepage can be monitored with various high-tech diagnostic tools, including 4-D seismic imaging. But if carbon capture and storage is going to be deployed on a global scale, these problems grow exponentially. "We don't even believe China's GDP numbers," says Joe Romm, the author of *Hell and High Water*, a new book about global warming. "Who is going to be the certifying body that double-checks to make sure they're storing as much CO_2 as they say they are?"

In a world determined to tackle global warming, none of these problems are insurmountable. Nor are they an excuse to delay legislation that will drive big cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. Clearly, every ton of CO_2 that is safely locked underground is a step in the right direction. But the notion that coal is the solution to America's energy problems is a technological fantasy on par with the dream of a manned mission to Mars.

By all means, let's praise innovative companies that take risks with new technology, and let's boost federal funding for carbon capture and storage research—the more we know about the costs and risks of burying CO_2 the better. But let's not lose sight of the big picture here. Coal is the fuel of the past, not the future. The sooner we muster up the courage to admit that, the sooner the revolution can begin. ■

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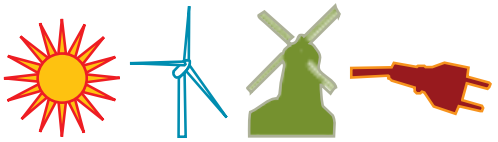
Flying Into Trouble



WHY MOST AIRPLANES MUST BE GROUNDED.

BY GEORGE MONBIOT

In *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore produces a graphic of the cities to which he has flown (sometimes by private jet) to talk about climate change. There are dozens of them, all over the world. I am glad that he gave those talks—his contribution to the fight against climate change is equal to that of all other environmental campaigners put together. But I was shocked not so much by his mode of travel as by his total lack of embarrassment—even, perhaps, of awareness—about the contradiction between what he was saying and what he was doing.

In Europe, where the environmental impacts of transport have been subject to furious debate for years, a climate change campaigner would never have exposed himself in this way. Had he flown as much as Gore, he would have felt it necessary to explain that he could not otherwise have been so effective. He would never set foot in a private jet. He might have conducted his talks by video link—and made a point of that in the film.

Jets produce staggering amounts of carbon dioxide and other gases that accelerate global warming. But in North America the impacts of transport—especially flying—are only beginning to nudge the political surface.

Carbon dioxide emissions per passenger mile from a standard airliner are very similar to those from cars. But you can cover nearly 15,000 miles in one day by plane. The CO_2 produced by planes is augmented by the other greenhouse gases they release, magnifying its effect by 270 percent. This means that flying is one of the most destructive things we can do.

It appears that the only ethical option—and I realize that this will be an even less popular message in North America than it is in Europe—is greatly to reduce the number of flights we take. Because our economy has been built around the rapid mobility of goods and people (the volume of US airfreight grew by 372 percent between 1980 and 2004), this could be our greatest political challenge.

Officially, transport is the world's second-fastest-growing source of CO_2 emissions; between now and 2050, they are expected to double. But these numbers tell only half the story. The fastest-growing source of carbon emissions is the power sector, whose output is expected to quadruple by mid-century. But much of this growth should in fact be attributed to transportation, as it is partly driven by the use of coal and gas to make synthetic liquid fuels used for vehicles. Cars and planes could soon become the primary cause of global warming.

The automobile problem is—in engineering terms—relatively easy to address: All the necessary technologies required to slash emissions from surface transport exist already. But dealing with airplanes is a far more complicated problem. It means confronting not just the political and cultural resistance we meet while trying to clean up emissions from cars but also massive technical barriers.

Lifting a large passenger plane into the air and keeping it there is a feat subject to strict physical constraints, and it requires a massive amount of fossil fuel. The standard jet engine has more or less reached the limits of efficiency, and there is no replacement anywhere near production. There has been a great deal of talk about "blended wing bodies": planes in which the passengers sit in swollen wings. In principle they could cut fuel use 30 percent. But this is no more than a concept, whose stability and controllability have not been proven.

New fuels are the stuff of fantasy. Richard Branson, CEO of Virgin, is looking for ways to create biofuel for jets; to this end he has started a new company called Virgin Fuels. But biofuels cause more climate change than they prevent. Forests in South America and Southeast Asia are being cleared to plant oil palm, sugarcane and soya for transport fuel. A study by Wetlands International with the Dutch scientific consultants Delft Hydraulics found that the production of every ton of palm oil results in up to 33 tons of CO_2 emissions, as trees are burned and peat is drained. This means that palm oil causes up to ten times as much global warming as petroleum. Even if you could put it in planes in large quantities, biofuel would not solve the carbon problem.

A more promising alternative fuel is hydrogen, if made from renewable electricity. Jet engines can run on hydrogen; however, because it is a far less dense fuel than kerosene, the planes would have to be much wider to carry it. This means that they must fly in the stratosphere—otherwise they'd encounter too much drag. Unfortunately, the water vapor produced by burning hydrogen in the stratosphere would cause a climate-changing effect thirteen times greater than that of an ordinary subsonic plane.

As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change discovered, "there would not appear to be any practical alternatives to kerosene-based fuels for commercial jet aircraft for the next several decades."

The obvious replacements for planes are scarcely better. Fast passenger ships appear to be even worse for the environment than jets. One set of calculations I have seen suggests that the Queen Elizabeth II, the luxury liner run by Cunard, produces 9.1 tons of emissions per passenger on a return trip from Britain to New York. This is 7.6 times as much carbon as you produce when traveling by plane.

Nor are ultra-high-speed trains the answer. Though trains traveling at normal speeds have much lower carbon emissions than airplanes, Professor Roger Kemp of Lancaster University shows that energy consumption rises dramatically at speeds

George Monbiot's book Heat: How to Stop the Planet Burning *is published in the United States by South End Press. The sources for this article can be found on his website, www.monbiot.com.*

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above 125 miles per hour. Increasing the speed from 140 to 220 mph almost doubles the amount of fuel burned. If the trains are powered by electricity, and if that electricity is produced by plants burning fossil fuels, they cause more CO_2 emissions than planes. Running trains on renewable electricity is certainly possible, but this faces problems: Trains must run on time, and that means there is little room for "demand management," which means reducing the electricity load in response to fluctuations in supply. In all transport systems, high performance is incompatible with low consumption. The faster you go, the more energy you need.

There is one form of transoceanic transport that might help us reduce emissions, but this will not be a popular proposal. The total climate impact of a zeppelin, blimp or airship is 80 to 90 percent lower than the impact of a jet plane. Though forever associated with the Hindenburg disaster, airships are now quite safe. They have a range of up to 6,000 miles. Their top speed is around 80 mph. This is faster than ships but much slower than jetliners, which cruise at more than 500 mph. A flight from New York to London by airship would take forty-three hours. They also have trouble landing and taking off in high winds and making headway if the wind is against them. This makes travel times less reliable than those of jets.

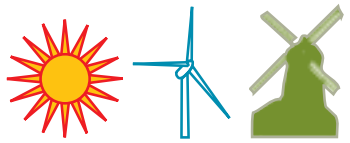
If we really have to cross the ocean, and if we are to make the reduction of carbon emissions a top priority, airships might be the best form of transport. Already dirigibles are being developed for lifting superheavy cargo in and out of inaccessible areas.

It seems to me that the only way the number of flights by passenger jet can be significantly and permanently reduced is through a reduction in the capacity of airports. Unfortunately, all over the world, airports are expanding. In Britain, for example, Tony Blair's government has instructed airports to double their capacity to accommodate a projected rise in the number of passengers from 228 million in 2005 to 500 million in 2030.

Reversing this trend is extremely difficult, but it is necessary if we are to have a high chance of preventing runaway climate change. Some sectors—tourism and hotels, for example—will undoubtedly suffer. We would need to get used to vacationing closer to home, or traveling less frequently and for longer. Corporations would have to start making better use of technology, conducting much of their business through video conferences and electronic gatherings. But it is surely not beyond the wit of humankind to maintain a healthy economy without having to load 200 pounds of human being onto an airplane every time something needs to be discussed.

Less jet travel will be extremely hard to sell. It flies in the face of everything we have been encouraged to regard as progress. But climate change appears to demand that progress be redefined. It suggests that the sum of human welfare will now be enhanced not by new economic freedoms but by new restraints. ■

Don't Bet on Offsets



Erasing your 'carbon footprint' is a tricky business.

BY A.C. THOMPSON AND DUANE MOLES

Tom Arnold, a self-described "environmental nerd from San Francisco," had a pair of gifts for many of the Hollywood celebrities at February's seventy-ninth Academy Awards show: a crystal raindrop tchotchke crafted by a Vermont glassblower, and with it a certificate for 100,000 pounds of carbon dioxide reductions.

Arnold runs TerraPass, a web-based startup company that bills itself as "a leading retailer of carbon offsets"—the latest trend in green marketing, aimed at affluent, eco-sensitive consumers eager to fight global warming. Criticism of the extravagant gift bags offered to Academy stars in years past—the free jewelry, high-end cosmetics and other expensive goodies created unexpected tax liabilities and unflattering press coverage—led to discontinuing the practice, until Arnold suggested a gift enabling those who are among our highest energy users to lighten their "carbon footprint."

A.C. Thompson is a staff reporter at the Center for Investigative Reporting. Duane Moles is a CIR associate and a student at the Graduate School of Journalism at UC, Berkeley. This story is part of CIR's multimedia climate change investigation, which includes the documentary Hot Politics, *airing on PBS's* Frontline *April 24, and at pbs.org/frontline.*

The Oscar gift packs—dispensed to ninety carbon-emitting Hollywood icons, including Jack Nicholson, Cameron Diaz and Clint Eastwood—were a publicity coup for TerraPass. "If we want to influence a big environmental issue, engaging celebrities and engaging people's heroes and role models is a really good place to start," he says. "You get tremendous leverage."

TerraPass and a burgeoning number of carbon offset services help people calculate how much carbon dioxide they generate, and how much investment is needed in carbon-reducing technologies to make up for—"offset"—the damage caused by their activities. Essentially it's a form of self-taxation: If the government and mega-corporations won't fund the switch from a fossil fuel–based economy to an alt-energy system, the consumer can. In recent years offsetting has ballooned into an annual business of $30 million. But some environmentalists are decidedly skeptical of the concept, seeing the industry as akin to the medieval church practice of selling indulgences to sinners—noblemen who ate meat on Friday or did something bad to a servant girl could, with the proper donation, have their spiritual records expunged. The eco-fantasy of offsets allows people the illusion of having it both ways: Burn lots of jet fuel but avoid doing harm.

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On a practical level, while the money raised by offsets can be useful, new doubts are emerging about the industry's basic accounting. A December 2006 survey of the offset business, compiled by a team of specialists in the field, criticized the majority of the companies hawking the product. "There are no widely accepted standards…as to what qualifies as an 'offset' for purposes of making consumers carbon neutral," notes the report, titled *A Consumer's Guide to Retail Carbon Offset Providers*. "Almost anyone can offer to sell you almost anything and claim that this purchase will make you carbon neutral." Commissioned by Clean Air-Cool Planet, the study looked at thirty firms and gave the majority of them poor marks.

Whatever their intentions, these companies operate in an accountability vacuum. While the Kyoto Protocol established widely accepted guidelines for countries looking to offset their greenhouse gas emissions, at the consumer level there's little agreement about anything—no universal standards for estimating a person's carbon footprint, no agreement on the technologies that are most helpful in reducing global warming and no regulatory body to oversee the industry.

Some enviros are skeptical of an industry that appeals to the consumer's conscience but has no standards and no oversight.

"It's like the Wild West out there," comments Anja Kollmuss, a member of the Climate Initiative team at Tufts University, which has studied the difference between the regulated and unregulated carbon markets.

To really understand the controversial new world of carbon offsets, you need a quick primer on the Kyoto Protocol. The protocol enshrined the offsetting concept by creating something called the Clean Development Mechanism.

The CDM works like this: While Kyoto requires wealthy nations to cut back on greenhouse gases within their borders, they can get credit for investing in industrial-scale eco-projects in the developing world. In other words, the more affluent nations are offsetting their pollution by helping to trim greenhouse emissions elsewhere. (And they're doing so because it's generally cheaper to undertake antipollution efforts in less developed countries.)

The projects are verified as green and working by the CDM executive board, a wing of the United Nations. Examples include a Brazilian paper plant that generates electricity from leftover wood pulp (Britain funded that); a 24.65-megawatt wind farm in China (Sweden and the Netherlands underwrote it); and ambitious plans to convert the manure of Indian cows into cooking fuel for more than 5,000 homes (thank you, France). Under CDM rules, offsets are only granted for new—or "additional"—antiwarming projects that wouldn't have been launched otherwise. For example, if a Bolivian power company erects an array of wind turbines to meet its government's regulations on renewable energy, that project is not additional, because it would have happened without outside support.

Here in the United States the deals offered by TerraPass and other web-based outfits like DrivingGreen, Climate Care, the Carbon Neutral Company and the Bonneville Environmental Foundation promise to offset consumers' contributions to rising temperatures through investment in green endeavors such as wind and solar energy, tree planting, etc. But there are no hard and fast rules governing the retail sales of offsets—some of which are questionable, and many of which wouldn't meet CDM standards. Some of the offsetters are for-profit corporations that make money from each offset sale, while others are nonprofit organizations.

In the case of TerraPass, one of its major offset investments—and this gets complicated—takes the form of climate offset derivatives sold on the Chicago Climate Exchange for a methane-burning dump owned by Waste Management. A publicly traded company with $20 billion in assets and a long history of environmental abuses, Waste Management is hated by most enviros. In filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission, the company admits to facing four lawsuits for allegedly transgressing state and federal air pollution laws. Waste Management owns sixteen of the most toxic sites in the country—all locations listed on the EPA's Superfund roster—and is budgeting more than $260 million for environmental remediation at its landfills and dumps, SEC records show.

In the wake of the Oscars giveaway, *Business Week* revealed that TerraPass takes credit for funding methane-burning machinery at a Waste Management dump near Springdale, Arkansas. Because methane traps twenty-one times more heat than carbon dioxide, burning it—which transforms it into carbon dioxide—is actually environmentally beneficial. (Better still, though, is capturing methane and using as an energy source rather than "flaring" it off.)

But was it TerraPass's cash that induced Waste Management to make this earth-friendly move? In fact, *Business Week* discovered documents showing that Arkansas officials had pressured the company to install the equipment as early as 2001. Further, Waste Management planned to purchase the methane-burning system long before TerraPass got involved. The deal raises the question of whether consumers really need to be making charitable donations to Waste Management, a giant corporation with a scandalous environmental record.

For its part, TerraPass has launched an ongoing internal investigation into whether the deal was proper. But, in general, says TerraPass's Tom Arnold, large corporations like Waste Management should not be excluded from the offset business. "We cannot fight climate change without major corporations on board," he notes, adding, "We expect carbon offsets to be controversial. It's complex and it's turning into a political issue."

Other offsetters employ different strategies. Climate Care, based in Britain, shipped nearly 10,000 highly efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs to Kazakhstan, where electricity is generated mostly by older, wasteful coal-fired power plants, and the firm is sending another 10,000 or so bulbs to the island of Majuro in the Marshall Islands. Another firm, CO2balance.com, plants trees on former farmlands in England.

Forestry projects are controversial among global warming analysts, because it takes years for saplings to mature and start sucking up sizable quantities of carbon dioxide—plus, when the trees die and decompose, they release that CO_2 back into the air. Research shows that planting trees in places with a moderate

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climate is less effective than sowing trees in warmer zones.

The Portland, Oregon–based Bonneville Environmental Foundation, a nonprofit, funnels money to wind and solar plants that are already up and running. Sales director Patrick Nye says the money "sends a good market signal that we should continue to invest" in renewable energy. But are charitable donations to private investors really the best way to promote the growth of utility-scale renewables? After all, the decision to invest is far more likely to be influenced by government policies and the potential for profits than the possibility of receiving such donations.

Then there are deeper questions about the very idea of offsetting. The December 2006 study of the offset industry suggested that consumers are getting bamboozled. "Because a carbon offset is an intangible commodity, it is very difficult for consumers—even environmentally savvy ones—to differentiate between a high-quality and a low-quality offering."

The report went on to rate thirty offset firms on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the best score. Three-quarters of the firms scored below five because of "a basic lack of information and transparency" and "a lack of attention to offset quality."

Under such conditions, "there's a very heavy potential for scams and fraud," says Dave Hamilton, who directs the Sierra Club's global warming and energy program. "We have to make sure people aren't paying for nothing."

For consumers, figuring out where the money goes is only the half of it. There's also the matter of measuring the size of the carbon footprint they want to offset.

Consider a typical scenario: Someone with a little extra income wants to offset the emission of her car, say a late 1990s Volkswagen Jetta she drives roughly 15,000 miles a year. The first step is to visit the website of an offsetter to see how much CO_2 the vehicle is belching and how much it will cost to defray the damage. According to the TerraPass site, that car spews out 5.22 metric tons of carbon particles annually. Bonneville, on the other hand, puts the figure at 5.55 tons, while a third firm, DrivingGreen, says the Jetta emits just 2.99 tons. Each site allows users to input different data, thus producing the dramatically different results.

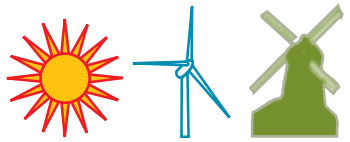
The wildly divergent figures, says Bonneville's Nye, reflect the lack of a "national protocol" for measuring a car's carbon output. DrivingGreen director Dan Linsky wasn't aware of the discrepancies until we contacted him for this article.

The prices vary dramatically as well. For example, $49.95 buys 15,000 miles' worth of offsets from TerraPass. That same year of offsets can be purchased for $24 from Driving Green or as much as $216 from Bonneville.

Exactly how that money is being spent is hard to determine—most of the for-profit firms we spoke with wouldn't reveal exactly how much money they're passing on to carbon-curbing projects. Bonneville's tax returns show that the foundation sold $1.8 million worth of offsets under the Green Tags brand name during its last fiscal year; the foundation directed about $1.2 million toward wind and solar facilities.

While the ideas implicit in offsets are worthy—the impulse to address climate change, the willingness to pay for it, the interest in green technologies—many enviros see the whole debate on offsets as something of a distraction. At the Sierra Club, for example, climate change experts think carbon-conscious people should concentrate on minimizing their use of electricity and oil rather than compensating for that damage with offsets. Sierra's Hamilton thinks the desire to buy offsets reflects an earnest desire to do something about global warming, but he adds, "What we really need is to get people focused on how they can make reductions" in energy consumption. "Our message, essentially, is that as a society we need to reduce our emissions by 2 percent per year for the next forty years," he says. "We're not going to do that through offsets." ■

Fevered Imagination



ARTISTIC RESPONSES TO GLOBAL WARMING.

BY LAWRENCE WESCHLER

"Two paths lie before us," Jonathan Schell concluded his remarkable essay *The Fate of the Earth* more than twenty years ago. "One leads to death, the other to life. If we choose the first path…we in effect become the allies of death, and in everything we do our attachment to life will weaken: our vision, blinded to the abyss that has opened at our feet, will dim and grow confused; our will, discouraged by the thought of trying to build on such a precarious foundation anything that is meant to last, will slacken; and we will sink into stupefaction, as though we were gradually weaning ourselves from life in preparation for the end. On the other hand, if we reject our doom, and bend our efforts toward survival…then the anesthetic fog will lift: our vision, no longer straining not to see the obvious, will sharpen; our will, finding secure ground to build on, will be restored; and we will take full and clear possession of life again. One day—and it is hard to believe that it will not be soon—we will make our choice."

That essay of course proved a clarion call in the then burgeoning (if subsequently somewhat stunted) movement to banish nuclear weapons, and as such, alas, it remains as urgent as

Lawrence Weschler, winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Everything That Rises: A Book of Convergences *(McSweeney's), is the director of NYU's Institute for the Humanities and the artistic director of the Chicago Humanities Festival, whose theme this November will be "The Climate of Concern."*

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Sunday:
Dinner with Richard Dreyfuss

Monday:
Q and A with Ralph Nader and Liza Featherstone

Tuesday:
Ogling the Hubbard Glacier next to Mark Hertsgaard

Wednesday Night:
At the blackjack table with Victor Navasky

Thursday:
Cocktails with Katrina vanden Heuvel

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Mark Hertsgaard
Nation environment correspondent and author of *Earth Odyssey*

Richard Dreyfuss
Academy Award winning actor and education activist

Robert Scheer
Nation contributing editor and editor of Truthdig.com

Mary Mapes
Peabody Award-winning CBS News producer and author of *Truth and Duty*

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ever. It had broader resonance, though, as the nuclear question was seen by many as but a single instance of man's increasingly rampaging (technological) assault on the world—the war on terra, as it were. Either way, Schell was clearly onto something fundamental in his assertion that the nuclear and environmental crises were, before anything else, crises of vision. As such, these crises made a specific call on the attentions not just of scientists and politicians but on those of writers and artists—people, that is, whose very vocation is vision.

Today, as global warming threatens being, time, presence, co-presence, tradition, posterity, dominion and stewardship, the very capacity to imagine and then originate something new—the fundamentals out of which art has always sprung—some artists have been rising to the challenge. In the notes that follow I hazard a tentative, impressionistic, admittedly idiosyncratic *tour d'horizon*—less an exhaustive survey than the beginnings of a stab at a typology of the way some visual artists have been addressing the crisis very much at hand.

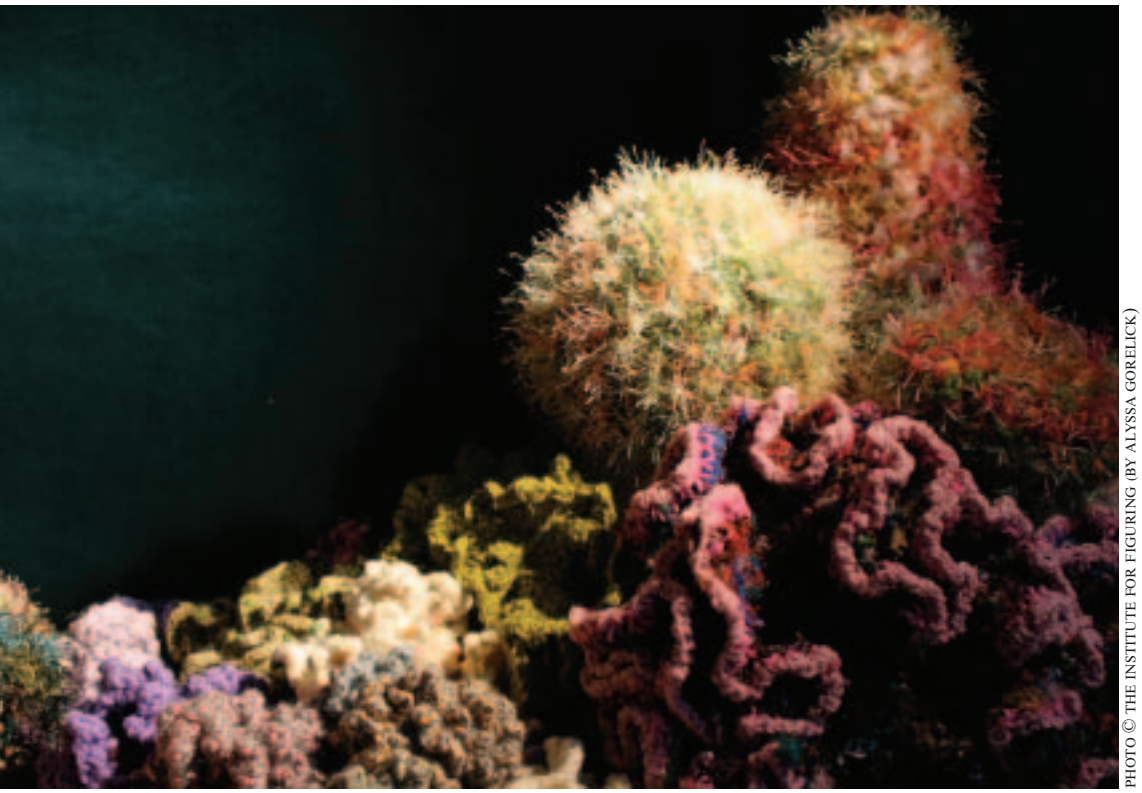

PHOTO © THE INSTITUTE FOR FIGURING (BY ALYSSA GORELICK)

Institute for Figuring crochet coral reef, with sea slug by Marianne Midelburg

For starters, of course, there are the artists who address the environmental issue head-on, often in the form of exhibitions with massive science fair–like wall postings, lots and lots of words, all quite earnest though in the end not terribly satisfying as art (and as a result perhaps not terribly effective as agitprop either). Sometimes the underlying project may even be quite suggestive and inspired, but the documentation would work much better as a book, say, than a white-box exhibit (see, for example, Bruce Mau's *Massive Change* volume, based on a touring show that was arguably the most impressive recent instance of this sort). For the purposes of this survey, however, I am simply going to bracket such pieces over to the side.

Occasionally, artists go out and literally plant fields, and the result can be startlingly evocative. I am thinking, for example, of the sublimely rustling *Wheatfield* Agnes Denes spread across a landfill off the edge of the rapidly developing Battery Park City in downtown Manhattan in 1982. Or the miniature representation of a wild grass prairie, recently slotted into the 2.5-acre Lurie Garden of Chicago's Millennium Park.

In this context, Chicago's Dan Peterman stands as a sort of bridging figure, a protean character who has given his whole life over to practical interventions (devising fresh ways of building with recycled materials, etc.) but at the same time flitting in and out of the gallery and academic contexts. In his recent show at the Andrea Rosen Gallery in New York City, for example, he included a full-scale 2-by-4 wood-beam frame of a mysterious structure, which turned out to be an exact elaboration of a Han Dynasty funerary object representing a combination latrine/pigsty (people ate, defecated, the pigs would eat the results, get eaten and so forth—a perfect cycle whose inclusion within a gravesite suggested its own perfect cycle). The installation was all the more telling in light of the fact that the preference of the burgeoning Chinese middle class for wood-frame rather than traditional brick construction is having a devastating effect on the world's surrounding forests (with all the macro-funerary premonitions that fact portends).

Other artists traffic in more conventional forms: silkscreens, paintings, sculptures. Thus, for example, Andy Warhol with his "Endangered Species" colored screen prints from 1983 (tree frog, panda, bald eagle and so forth)—but what subject didn't Warhol address across his promiscuously heterodox life production? Or, Alexis Rockman, across his entire career, loopily imagining and then vividly realizing wildly colorful paintings of all manner of over-fecund naturescapes, from paradisiacal jungles to infernos of industrial process. And Maya Lin, who in her most recent touring show, "Systematic Landscapes," rendered the Caspian, Red and Black seas out of Baltic birch plywood (topographically scooped-out basins hovering out into space, their bottommost depths barely kissing the supporting plinths).

Other artists have gone in for the single grand gesture, a sort of political cartoon pumped up on aesthetic steroids and writ large. For example, Chris Burden's stunning *Medusa's Head* of 1990, now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, a huge, looming, several-ton rock-and-cement planetoid, hanging like a slab of rotting meat from a ceiling chain, taking up virtu-

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ally its entire room, the entire mass gagging on skeins of toy train tracks and other representations of industrialization run amok. Or, at the other extreme, the even vaster floating globe of uncannily radiating light that constituted the mesmerizing centerpiece to Olafur Eliasson's legendary installation *The Weather Project* in the multistory vault of the Turbine Hall of London's Tate Modern in 2004. Or the noisy black rainbow (gunpowder explosively hurled into sky across a one-minute sequence) that Cai Guo-Qiang unfurled high above a downtown park on an otherwise gleaming afternoon in Valencia, Spain, in May 2005. And then, there have been the hauntingly suggestive roomwide installations of Ann Hamilton and Tara Donovan.

Somewhat more modestly scaled, though equally compelling, have been some of the more recent efforts of the young Brooklyn artist David Opdyke: a tabletop rendition of a United States gone parch dry and given over to desert badlands; a wall piece cross-section of the geographic strata layered beneath an uninhabited bucolic scene, with one layer, deep deep down, consisting of bombs, undegraded plastics and other human detritus; and, most recently, a freestanding skyscraperscape, the soaring buildings abandoned and starting to sag and crumple under an encroaching jungle invasion.

Some projects have been engaging the global warming crisis more directly, such as photographer David Buckland's remarkable Cape Farewell enterprise, which over the past several years has taken teams of scientists, architects, choreographers, writers (Ian McEwan, Gretel Ehrlich), composers (Max Eastley), along with several artists (including Antony Gormley and Rachel Whiteread) aboard a 100-year-old Dutch schooner for weeks-long expeditions into the high, high arctic, yielding all sorts of urgent responses, including Eastley's *Arctic Symphony* (rendered entirely out of recorded sounds—wind and walrus, cracking iceberg, throbbing engines) and Whiteread's own icefield-like intervention in the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall last year.

Other artists, who don't seem at first glance to be engaging the issue at all, are in fact producing work that might be seen, considered more attentively, to be utterly suffused with it. David Hockney, for example, has embarked on a painterly production of achingly lyric attentiveness: hundreds of canvases portraying the passing seasons across the fragile countryside—farmland and forest, hillsides and hollows—of the beloved East Yorkshire of his youth. California artist Robert Irwin, for his part, has always shied away from explicitly political or socially themed engagement, insisting rather that his is an art of pure inquiry, trying at most, as he often says, "to get people to perceive themselves perceiving." But Dan Peterman, for example, counts Irwin as a huge influence ("I've always considered him a fundamentally ecological artist"), and Irwin himself, when I recently raised the question with him, replied, "It comes back to this question of the individual's taking his or her own responsibility, based on his or her own embeddedness, which is to say, awareness of the world. In all its dazzling complexity and immediacy and interconnectedness. In a civilization where people had been sensitized to act on that level, to be present in that way, things like global warming would be addressed immediately. They would have to be."

A final category of artistic response comes with the performative artists. People, for example, like the Yes Men, who, last May, perpetrated another of their sublimely subversive *Candid Camera*–like exposés of corporate America. Breaching a select conference of high-level reinsurance types considering the implications of "catastrophic loss" at a luxury retreat on Amelia Island, Florida, the performers cast themselves as representatives of a Halliburton company eager to display their latest technological innovation, "Survivaball suits"—orblike inflatable outercoverings (packed inside with all manner of gee-whiz high-tech gadgetry) that, for $100 million each, promised to keep individual corporate managers safe from the ravages of any future global warming. The conference-goers listened attentively and even volunteered to try on the clownish-looking suits. (The results, naturally, getting immediately posted to the web.)

The single best performance-art piece I ever witnessed (I describe it in detail in my *Wanderer in the Perfect City* collection) occurred in the context of the anti–Pershing missile mobilizations in Europe in the early 1980s, though as with Jonathan Schell's comments in *The Fate of the Earth*, its symbolism holds far wider pertinence. Knud Jensen, the founding director of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art—located on a bluff a half-hour north of Copenhagen, overlooking the Oresund and in the distance, Sweden—considered it part of his curatorial responsibility to allow antinuclear activists to stage fairs and rallies on the grounds of his museum. At one point, he invited a small group of local artist-activists, the Billedstofteatr, to contrive an intervention at a Peace Festival some months off. They in turn ran ads and gathered a motley crew of some 300 volunteers (businessmen, farmers, kids, grandparents) whom they then trained intensively

***Landslide 2004* by David Opdyke**

over several weeks. Which is how it came to pass that on the afternoon of the festival, as thousands of celebrants milled around the museum grounds, when the neighboring church bell struck six, suddenly (and at first imperceptibly), hundreds of lone individuals scattered about the grounds went stark frozen still—only, not as still as all that. Gradually (for now one did begin to notice that something strange was going on), all of them began to turn, ever so slowly toward the Sound, and then to move, trancelike, ever so haltingly, ever so slowly congealing into three groups (minutes

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passed like hours, and now everyone else was watching, drop-jawed, dumbfounded), which proceeded down the bluff and presently, shockingly, straight into the water, shivering, inexorable, the water finally up to their necks, in a vast appalling lemminglike processional, until at last they veered to the side, under a jetty, back landward and into a barnlike boathouse (where, this being Scandinavia, they all stripped naked and back into dry clothes, passing around drafts of warmed rum). Talk about waking people up to how they have been sleepwalking!

A similarly compelling (though entirely different) project is taking shape under the aegis of the Los Angeles–based Institute for Figuring. The institute's identical twin Australian scientist directors, Margaret and Christine Wertheim, alarmed at the sudden bleaching death of vast swaths of the Great Barrier Reef off their native Queensland (directly caused by rises in ambient water temperature, which in turn accounts for the common characterization of coral reefs as the canary in the mineshaft of global warming), have launched a mass-based art project of their own. Go to their website (www.theiff.org) to more fully gauge the remarkable confluence of mathematics, physics and biology behind the project, but suffice it to say that the best way to model non-Euclidean space is by crocheting it, and that when you do so, you get a stunning approximation of the great variety of shapes that the microscopic seaborne polyps off Queensland secrete on their own as they generate coral reefs. And so, polyplike, the Wertheim sisters are instigating fellow crocheters all over the world to start generating colorfully mottled crocheted reefs as a way of calling attention to the dire straits of their natural counterparts. The project (which is currently being highlighted, through June 17, along with the Cai Guo-Qiang, Warhol, and Yes Men instances cited above, at a fine survey show on artistic responses to global warming at the Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh) taps into the feminist handicraft revival as well—a virtual perfect storm of aesthetic confluences: all this and sly community building too!

The challenge with all this work—a challenge that artists share with every other sort of activist in this field—is how to wake people up to our desperately urgent circumstance without blowing them completely away, such that they curl back into a terrified oblivious stupor.

In this context, it might be appropriate to give the final word to the late, great Ellen Willis (how we need her, how we miss her already), words she herself penned all the way back in the early '80s. To wit: "The modernists' once-subversive refusal to be gulled or lulled has long since degenerated into a ritual despair at least as corrupt, soft-minded, and cowardly—not to say smug—as the false cheer it replaced. The terms of the dialectic have reversed: now the subversive task is to affirm an authentic post-modernist optimism that gives full weight to existent horror and possible (or probable) apocalyptic disaster, yet insists—credibly—that we can, well, overcome. The catch is that you have to be an optimist (an American?) in the first place not to dismiss such a project as insane." ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

tific breakthrough. But what if prostate cancer were caused by a sexually transmitted virus? Would we be engaging in a national debate about the promiscuity of men and whether or not they "deserve" prostate cancer? Would Bob Dole or Rudy Giuliani become the "poster children" for men who deserve what they got because of their past behavior?

For critics of Gardasil who cite "lifestyle choice" as a reason to oppose the cervical cancer vaccine (which immunizes against four strains of cancer), I would suggest that there is a long list of illnesses that we treat at taxpayer expense related to lifestyle choice. Heart disease and high cholesterol can be caused by poor diet. A choice. Skin cancer can be caused by overexposure to the sun and failure to wear sunscreen. A choice. Lung cancer, emphysema, complications from obesity or diabetes—linked to personal choices.

Men carry the human papillomavirus at the same rate as women. Most men will never know they carry it and will never develop a single symptom. Women, however, can develop cervical cancer from the virus and a number of other complications that can be painful, life-altering or fatal. Women, therefore, need to speak out to protect their health and their lives. This is about health, not sex.

The same cultural conservatives who oppose abortion claim they are only trying to save lives, not control women. Here is their opportunity to save lives. Support Gardasil. Unless, of course, it is about controlling women.

KIM STANLEY

IMMIGRATION: A VEXING ISSUE

Austin, Tex.

■ I would like to share my opinion regarding your view on immigration. I agree with just about everything your publication prints, except on this issue. I come from a family of *legal* immigrants, and I do not understand why anyone would think that coming here *illegally* is OK. I work in the medical field, and it makes me sick to see that we are basically providing free healthcare for people here illegally, while my kids (21 and 26) are uninsured—and that my husband lost his good job six years ago and can't even get a job working at a restaurant, much less any big company, since one hires illegals and the other outsources.

I am sick of the education system, which spends more time and money on bilingual education than on kids diagnosed with learning disabilities (my son). (By the way, I lived in Latin America as a child, and when I came here I was immersed in English, and that is the way I learned, as fast as I could, to function in this American society.) I am very liberal, I always vote Democratic, but I am getting so angry that this side is so misguided by illegal (yes, *illegal*) immigration.

GRETA OLIVAS

Fairhaven, Mass.

■ Legal immigrants or illegal immigrants—what's the difference? These are people, often in dire straits, trying to make a living in a land that, despite all our problems, does offer opportunities. I don't believe illegals are taking anybody's job away—they are doing the work most of us won't do, and they provide cheap labor for a myriad of industries. It's up to all of us to insure that all jobs pay at the very least a living wage to all workers, irrespective of their legal status.

Furthermore, Hispanic illegals are forced out of their own countries, directly or indirectly, by US policies that have established, supported and funded repressive governments that put profit over workers' rights and prevented anything approaching the redistribution of wealth. Had we actively supported democracy, justice and freedom in these countries, and not the opposite, the need to immigrate to the United States may well have been obviated. The truth of the matter is that *we owe them big time*! And the least we can do is allow them to make a living in this country.

CHRISTOPHER SALT

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

It's Doom Alone That Counts

MARCO ROTH

The world is Steve Hogan's mirror. The eyes of the bartenders, policemen, garage owners and doctors he encounters over the course of a Labor Day weekend drive that turns into a binge from hell tell him what he already thinks he knows: He is a drunk, a fool, a coward and a failure. His wife's eyes tell him the same thing, so he leaves her in their car by a roadside bar and goes in to have a drink, which quickly becomes two, then three. They're on their way to pick up the kids from camp in Maine. Meanwhile, the radio reports that a prisoner has escaped from Sing Sing, but all Hogan remembers is that they share a last name ending in "gan." In the bar, Hogan meets a stranger who knows him "like a brother" and has the same blue eyes and white shirt and close-cropped blond hair. After this self-satisfying communion with a character who might only be his reflection in the bar's mirror, Hogan finds that his wife has continued the journey by bus.

Since this is a novel, nothing is without consequence. We know the escaped con will come into it somewhere, and so he does. Hogan picks him up at another bar and discovers a different mirror image, his ideal man. As Hogan puts it in one of his drunken monologues:

> So, you see, they make rules that they call laws, and they call sin anything that scares them in other people. That's the truth, brother! If they didn't shake in their boots, if they were real men, they'd have no need for police forces and law courts, for preachers and churches, no need for banks, for life-insurance, for Sunday schools and red and green lights at the street corners. Does a guy like you give a damn for all that?

Hogan's hero turns out to be the man who just raped his wife, while he was drinking in the first roadside bar. When Hogan wakes up with a hangover, no money, no identification and no idea of what's happened, he discovers his need for all the forces of order he has just damned. In the end, he will accuse himself of having raped his own wife by proxy and almost by force of will, and that sense of guilt is the only redemption he's allowed.

Set along the Eisenhower era's new highways and soon-to-be suburbs spreading from Long Island to New England, *Red Lights* is but one of the nearly 200 novels Georges Simenon published under his own name. In his lifetime, he made his reputation as the creator of the popular Inspector Maigret series, but tales of the ultra-bourgeois detective with his omnipresent pipe are only a fraction of a total output that includes investigative journalism, pseudonymous crime novellas, a multivolume memoir, as well as the work he considered his best, the psychological novels often known by the alluringly pornographic moniker *les durs*—the hard ones.

BOOKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ESSAY

RED LIGHTS • THE ENGAGEMENT • TROPIC MOON • THREE BEDROOMS IN MANHATTAN • THE MAN WHO WATCHED TRAINS GO BY • THE STRANGERS IN THE HOUSE • DIRTY SNOW • MONSIEUR MONDE VANISHES

All by Georges Simenon.
All New York Review.

To posterity, then, the Belgian-born writer appears as one of literature's great graphomaniacs. Where other novelists had moods, fantasies and love affairs that may or may not have influenced their work, Simenon seemed to turn every mood, every passing fantasy, every love affair into a novel. And there were quite a lot of fantasies and affairs. On the rare occasions when he wasn't writing, Simenon had lots of sex: with prostitutes, mistresses—even with wives (he had two, although his preferred mode was a *ménage à trois* that included a housekeeper or personal secretary). It usually took him between six and fourteen days to produce a novel. The affairs often

Marco Roth is an editor at n + 1.

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took an equivalent amount of time, while the marriages averaged twenty years.

Literary theorist Gérard Genette remarked that graphomaniacs pose a special problem to scholars since it's hard to know where life ends and writing begins. Does it make sense to mark the end of one novel and the beginning of the next, or should the entire lifework, including journals and random jottings, be understood as a sort of stream of consciousness, and the pauses in between as merely like rests in music? Simenon is a perfect test case, despite the sharply defined compartments and the tight formulaic plots he used to separate the man who was Maigret from the man who was more often Maigret's quarry—the man who could write *The Engagement*, a novel that eerily predicted the psychological mechanics of fascism, and the man who lived a comfortable war in an aristocrat's chateau, hosting dinners for German officers while the Nazi-run film industry adapted nine of his novels.

As the New York Review of Books Classics series publishes Simenon after Simenon at a rate the novelist would envy, it's tempting to read them all in a lump, as an extensive, though still partial, psychological portrait of the writer: his tendencies, obsessions and anxieties, as well as his superbly organized defenses against these fears. This is not to suggest that these novels are straightforwardly autobiographical or confessional in any way. Some are set within larger ongoing historical events, like the French colonization of West Africa (*Tropic Moon*); others are deliberately petty dramas of middle- and lower-middle-class life in the process of breakdown (*The Engagement*, *The Man Who Watched Trains Go By, The Strangers in the House*) or, in rarer cases, under repair, whether in Europe or America (*Three Bedrooms in Manhattan*). As with *Red Lights*, the typical *dur* plot chronicles a man's desperately misguided or failed bid for freedom from social constraints. In the worldly and constricted form of the hard-boiled mystery novel, Simenon subjects the wish to go "anywhere out of this world" to a ruthless scrutiny. There are middle-aged men who walk out on their families for uncertain adventure, young men who take up crime or leave Europe for Africa and run away again when they can't face the horror, men who look out of windows, men who keep waiting to feel alive.

COURTESY FONDS SIMENON, LIÈGE UNIVERSITY, BELGIUM

Simenon gave his method a slightly sadistic title: "stripping man naked." Most often this meant reducing man to a state of permanent adolescent narcissism and alienation. It wasn't just a metaphor; the idea often shows up literally, in a series of Magritte-like snapshots (that's *clichés* in French): clothes piled up by the canal, top hat on top, a man dressed only in an overcoat walking the train lines in an industrial Paris suburb, a man waking up naked in a hotel room while a prostitute goes through his clothes. In just about every *dur*, the attempt to escape the confines of middle-class life fails in the first minutes of freedom if it's not doomed from the start.

These novels rise above the clichés, much in the way Hitchcock's films also transcend their pulpy trappings, via a fascination with acts of looking, spying, voyeurism, self-regard and surveillance. They are all about looking, which is to say they're also about the impulse to write fiction and what happens when the contained impulse to imagine and fantasize breaks through to reality. In *Monsieur Monde Vanishes*, the relatively innocuous protagonist begins his fugitive career merely by "rais[ing] his eyes" from the Paris streets: He "noticed the pink chimney pots outlined against a pale blue sky where a tiny white cloud was floating.… It reminded him of the sea." The next step is predictable: He leaves his wife, who conveniently doesn't love him. It turns out he's always been looking in and out of windows, and he decides he's never been alive. Soon he's in Marseille playing sugar daddy to a stripper he's nursed back from a botched suicide. Watching her suck down shellfish and put on her face in a bistro, he still can't quite shake the feeling of déjà vu:

> There was another scene that had often struck Monsieur Monde, a scene one can glimpse in the streets of Paris when one peers into a restaurant through the window: facing one another across a table from which the meal has been cleared, with a soiled tablecloth, coffee cups, glasses of brandy…a middle-aged stoutish man with a florid complexion and a happy though somewhat anxious look in his eyes, and a young woman holding her handbag up to her face and repainting the bow of her lips with the help of the mirror. He had dreamed of that. He had envied them.

The number of reflections and double visions in this scene alone is dizzying. An entire dissertation on Lacanian psychology could be made out of it. Monsieur Monde, not quite a man of the world, yearns to be exactly that, but what he wants, just as much, is to be ignored by a woman who is watching herself in a mirror. Only then will he feel alive! This, in effect, is what happens, as he eventually takes a job surveying the patrons at an illegal casino and brothel to make sure there are no undercover cops, surrounded by vice and always on the lookout for the police.

The obsession with voyeurism is most explicit in one of Simenon's earliest *durs*, *The Engagement* (1933). This is the eighth and the most recent in the NYRB series, but Simenon neophytes ought to read it first. The unfortunate Monsieur Hire, born Hirovitch, son of a Jewish tailor, is the classic creep and loner: He's fat, but in an unhealthy childish way; he commutes to a desk job, but works alone. His two passions are bowling and watching the redhead across the courtyard of his tenement as she undresses and gets into bed with a novel, presumably a Simenon. Of course, it is the voyeur's delusion to imagine himself invisible. She knows he's watching, and everyone in the cramped tenement in the overcrowded Parisian suburb just outside the Thirteenth Arrondissement has their own theories about Monsieur Hire: Parents think he's a pedophile; his bowling buddies think he's a police agent; the concierge, that great source of everyday surveillance and bad intelligence, believes he's the man who recently murdered a prostitute. The police are called in, the real murderer gets involved and the inevitable scapegoat-

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ing begins. *The Engagement* captures the nightmare sense that modern urban life will abolish privacy for good, the crowd will take over and its paranoid gaze will never forgive those who are unable to meet its eyes—that is to say, anyone and everyone outside it. While the Internet has changed the possibilities for voyeurism and ordinary spying, there are still places in the world—England's crowded Asian immigrant housing estates, for instance, or Karachi—where such crowd dynamics still matter. *The Engagement* should be required reading for every American intelligence officer who relies on "informers" to pick out suspected terrorists.

On the rare occasions when things work out well for Simenon's characters, it is only through a particularly fortunate kind of framing. *Three Bedrooms in Manhattan* (1946) begins with a one-night stand between a self-exiled and once-famous French actor, whose wife has left him for a younger man, and the mysterious cosmopolitan woman who picks him up after she's been thrown out of her shared apartment by her roommate's jealous husband. The lovers are held together by things external to each of them, the great forces of urban life and mass culture. They meet in an all-night New York diner, are united by a jukebox song, go to a cheap hotel to make love. The things that they think of as "theirs" are actually a kind of common property, and their romance blossoms by its very arbitrariness. The characters know they are playing roles for each other, roles for which others could be cast at any moment. What changes this sense of radical contingency in all human relationships is a different kind of lucky break. When the man at last takes the woman home to his bachelor room, she notices a "Jewish tailor" who lives opposite, always alone, more deeply alone than either of them. He never looks up from his work to watch the watchers across the way, and yet somehow, thanks to the indifferent but studied ignorance of this vaguely paternal figure, the lovers start treating each other as individuals with particular histories rather than as a means for satisfying basic needs. It's crucial to the novel that the lovers begin to believe they're not being lied to only after they notice this allegorical figment—God, the father—in a sordid and secularized world.

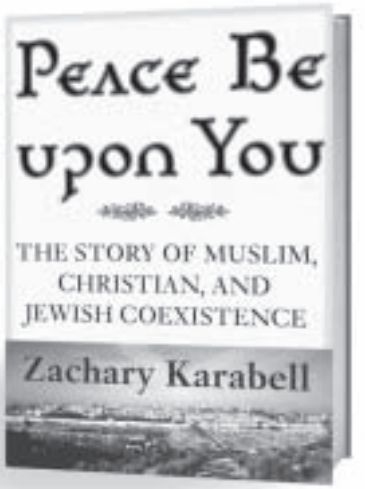
The religious resonance is not an accident or fancy over-interpretation. Although not observant or churchgoing, Simenon retained a deep fidelity to the heavily patriarchal, conservative, Catholic milieu in which he was raised. This existential Catholicism structures the Maigret mysteries (the detective thinks of himself as "a redresser of destinies") as well as the *durs*, and it heavily influenced Simenon's politics. The NYRB introductions mostly play down both Simenon's religiosity and his politics. They insist either that Simenon was a humanist or just bravely, quirkily and artistically apolitical for someone who lived through the most politically charged decades of the twentieth century. Yet Jean-Paul Sartre would have called his slightly older contemporary's quest to reveal a universal humanity or masculinity a form of "bad faith," a cowardly avoidance of reality by immersion in the sordid details and histories of everyday life when everyone ought to have been making tough political decisions. *Dirty Snow* (1948), Simenon's occupation novel, may capture the mood of Paris under the Nazis, but Simenon would also have us believe that his fatherless hero steals, kills, spies, rapes and steals again (in that order) just so he can find two fathers: the bad, punishing father in the Gestapo officer who arrests and tortures him and, in his obsession with Holst, the father of the girl he's violated, a good father who will forgive him. There is, however, a prison window and, as always, a woman visible from it:

> She wore a dressing gown…with a light-colored scarf around her head, while she shook out the rugs and blankets over the emptiness below. From so far away you couldn't make out her features. But from her brisk movements and from what she was doing, he guessed she had to be young. In spite of the cold, she left the window open for a long time while she came and went, tending to things inside, her cooking or her baby. He knew she had a baby, since the clothes she hung out to dry on the line stretched across the window were always tiny.
>
> Who knows? Maybe she was singing. She must be happy. He was fairly sure she was happy. After she closed the window she would be in her own home, with all the familiar household smells taking possession again.

Some of Simenon's critics have suggested that his avoidance of politics, especially after World War II, was deliberate. Less clear is whether his silence was motivated by guilt, sheer numbness or a sense of defeat. Pierre Assouline, author of the definitive biography, points to a series of articles Simenon wrote in 1921 for the *Gazette de Liège*, a Belgian newspaper, on

"A road map of hope"

—Bruce Feiler,
author of *Walking the Bible*



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"The Jewish Peril." These followed a "name and shame" pattern in which Simenon listed the major Jewish figures involved in post–World War I reconstruction. Tellingly, he began, "There exists a real Jewish peril against which national forces and, above all, Catholic forces, ought to struggle." While Simenon was just an 18-year-old reporter, and many people write shameful things at that age, his excuses came only much later, in 1985, when the articles were brought to light. As Assouline shows, Simenon always remained blind as to who was really in peril when it came to the Jews. This basic, petit-bourgeois anti-Semitism, allied with Catholicism and nationalism and combined with his skepticism about the positive prospects of increased human freedom, make up a profile common to many in Belgium and France who tacitly or overtly sympathized with fascism on the "soft" Italian and Action Française model, and later on the hard National Socialist one.

Simenon the novelist was less comfortable with fascist ideas than Simenon the cub reporter and human being. Monsieur Hire, for all his archetypal outsiderness, is more than a caricature; the old tailor is an Old Testament patriarch, and most of the other Jews in his fiction are no worse than anyone else. Yet Simenon's evasion of history, both in general and his own, stains his legacy. Even the apparent anticolonialism of *Tropic Moon* (1933) suffers in hindsight. While Simenon kept his eyes open long enough to detail the various forms of exploitation in French Gabon and the Congo, where he worked as a reporter, he also seemed to have put the colonies out of his mind when he stopped writing about them. "Africa—It doesn't exist" is the protagonist's conclusion as he ships back for France at the end of another disastrous love affair, this one with a particularly dangerous white woman. Although ironic, it's also sincere: Simenon wanted to be left alone, and he wanted Europeans to leave Africa alone. The damage he chronicles is more to the morals of the colonizer than the lives of the colonized.

In the end, Simenon could run, but he couldn't escape what he knew. He may now be a New York Review of Books "Classic," but his canonization reflects both the best and worst of the twentieth century's obsession with interior psychology. French historian Richard Vinen observes that Simenon's postwar novels almost never mention the war, certainly never the Holocaust. This omission would be less striking if Simenon hadn't sent his characters to some of the landmarks of the occupation, including the train station where Paris's Jews were deported and the town of Vichy itself. A similar implausibility hangs over *Three Bedrooms in Manhattan*. It's not an accident that the French actor has had to leave the country. That he, like Simenon, worked with the Franco-Nazi film industry during the war is never mentioned. Nor is it an accident that the woman he meets speaks Hungarian, French, German, Spanish and English. They seem like refugees because they probably were; their meeting could have happened only in the haven for stateless and statusless people that was post–World War II New York. Yet for Simenon, they are just refugees from failed love. So Simenon's graphomania could also be understood as his way of scribbling over a history he'd lived through and, albeit in a minor way, helped to create. He might have regretted it, too, a little. As Simenon probably knew, even the most meticulous, dedicated and disinterested-seeming voyeur cannot avoid a little wish fulfillment, or a blind spot. ■

Ill Will

CHARLES TAYLOR

LENI RIEFENSTAHL: A Life. By Jürgen Trimborn. Faber and Faber. 351 pp. $30.

LENI: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl. By Steven Bach. Knopf. 386 pp. $30.

The most durable piece of Nazi propaganda may yet turn out to be the belief that Leni Riefenstahl is an artistic genius. Ever since *Triumph of the Will* goose-stepped across movie screens in 1935, Riefenstahl has been central to the arguments about whether politics can be separated from art, whether form can be separated from content. With some dissenters, a critical consensus has emerged that goes something like this: Riefenstahl's films may be Nazi propaganda (and her own accounts of her relationship with Nazism sketchy at best), but they are also amazing and vital pieces of moviemaking whose art can be appreciated apart from the ideology they espouse.

It sounds like a good, hardheaded argument, just the sort of thing to upset the ideologues who insist on reducing art to a message—until you see the films.

Even if we could do what Riefenstahl's admirers claim we should, and separate the filmmaking in *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia* (1938)—the two films on which her reputation rests—from their wholehearted assent to the public face of Nazism, we are left with an aesthetic that is at once inane and imperial. Intended as public monuments to the Third Reich, the films are impressive in the impersonal, imagination-starved manner of something like the Hall of Presidents at Disney World (and Walt Disney was an admirer of Riefenstahl). Veering from hearty triumphalism to cloying folk sentimentality, Riefenstahl's two most famous films worship an ideal of indomitable inhuman imperfection, whether in the architecture of Albert Speer or among the athletes at the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. Riefenstahl had an undeniable knack for a singular strain of monstrous kitsch, but she was no artist.

She was lucky enough to have a fallen angel hovering over her. Some variation of the eternal "but" always swooped in to keep her from being dismissed as a mere propagandist. Susan Sontag, who had earlier praised Riefenstahl, delivered a staggering blow to the director's reputation in her famous 1975 essay for *The New York Review of Books*, "Fascinating Fascism." In it, Sontag declared Riefenstahl's celebrated portraits of the African Nuba tribe "the third in [her] triptych of fascist visuals" and said that "anyone who defends Riefenstahl's films as documentaries, if documentary is to be distinguished from propaganda, is being ingenuous. In *Triumph of the Will*, the document (the image) is no longer simply the record of reality; 'reality' has been constructed to serve the image." It's curious, then, that Sontag's damning judgment didn't preclude an automatic nod to *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia* as "undoubtedly superb films," maybe even "the two greatest documentaries ever made." A recent letter to the *New York Times Book Review* quoted Jodie Foster, who has long wished to direct and star in a film about Riefenstahl, claiming

Charles Taylor, a columnist for the Newark Star-Ledger*, is a contributor to the* New York Observer*, the* New York Times*,* Newsday *and other publications.*

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that Riefenstahl has been "libeled so many times" and that "people are afraid of how complicated she was."

Two new biographies, Jürgen Trimborn's *Leni Riefenstahl: A Life* and Steven Bach's *Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl* do not go so far as to break with the notion of Riefenstahl as an artist. But next to the damning evidence Trimborn and Bach have amassed, their occasional allowance for her talent has the force of a snowflake in an avalanche. It's too much to say that we are finally at the point where Leni Riefenstahl will be seen as the exceptionally lucky grotesque curiosity she was. There have always been film theorists and critics who've overlooked the meaning of her films in celebration of their form and, like Foster, those willing to believe in the complexity of an ambitious opportunist who, both publicly and privately, gushed over Hitler and the Nazi cause.

In his preface, Trimborn points out that part of the problem with uncovering the truth about Riefenstahl is the dearth of official documentation that could have challenged the director's always exculpatory account of her life. Another, which he does not mention, is that she was notoriously litigious. But with Riefenstahl no longer around (she died in 2003, at the age of 101), and with dogged research having uncovered new sources, Trimborn and Bach are free to compile the sources that expose her as an inveterate liar, fantasist and self-apologist, and even to add some new ones. Trimborn proves to be an especially deadly prosecutor. It's impossible to imagine any future work on Riefenstahl that does not take into account his patient, thorough demolition.

Bach, the former United Artists executive who wrote *Final Cut*, the riveting account of the disastrous production of *Heaven's Gate*, and biographies of Marlene Dietrich and Moss Hart, has delivered more of a standard bio. His writing can be shrewd ("Fate smiled on her in the person of Adolf Hitler, and she smiled back") or infelicitous ("Children played in courtyards; geraniums grew on windowsills; music and love got made"). His book doesn't match the courtroom thrill of Trimborn's, the drama of watching the evidence mount. But Bach is no more taken in by his subject than he was by another world-class megalomaniac, Michael Cimino, director of *The Deer Hunter* and *Heaven's Gate*. And Bach includes one detail that could have been the invention of a wicked satirist. In 1989, claiming to work for a BBC producer interested in making a documentary about her, none other than that Holocaust denier,

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David Irving himself, came a-calling on Riefenstahl. Kismet.

The interest here isn't in the account of Riefenstahl's career: her short-lived incarnation as a sort of Isadora Duncan *manquée*, starring roles in the wildly popular mountain-climbing films of Arnold Fanck, the start of her own filmmaking career with *The Blue Light* in 1932 and eventually the work for Hitler that would bring her fame. Trimborn believes that the key to Leni Riefenstahl was that she was a careerist. "The main thrust of her life and creativity," he writes, "was to create a major career, for which she willingly sacrificed everything and for which, through her pact with Hitler, she ultimately had to pay a high price." The key word in that sentence is "willingly." For both Trimborn and Bach, any suffering Riefenstahl encountered as a result of throwing in her lot with the Nazis she brought on herself.

The writers recognize that Riefenstahl's main interest was always self-interest. That doesn't mean that they buy her oft-repeated defense that she was ignorant of politics (one of her most outrageous claims was that she had never heard of Hitler until 1932), that she never shared the Nazis' anti-Semitism, that art was her only interest. As Riefenstahl always told it, she was only following *oeuvres*.

The books disprove those claims time and time again. When Béla Balázs, the avant-garde film theorist who, as a Jew and a Communist, was doubly under threat from the Nazis, pleaded to be paid for his collaboration with Riefenstahl on *The Blue Light*, she not only refused to pay him but wrote to Julius Streicher, editor of the viciously anti-Semitic tabloid *Der Stürmer*, requesting him to intercede to prevent "demands made upon me by the Jew Béla Balázs." (When the film was re-released in 1938, Balázs's name was removed from the credits, thus making it "Jew-free.") Trimborn quotes a 1976 interview in *Der Spiegel* with Harry Sokal, the Jewish banker turned producer who was also Riefenstahl's lover, remembering her blaming "Jewish critics for ruining her career. She said they were 'foreigners' who didn't understand her art, and that Hitler, were he to come to power, would no longer allow something like that." When cameraman Emil Schünemann refused to work with her on *Triumph of the Will*, Riefenstahl denounced him to the Reich Film Group in the Ministry of Propaganda in a letter that said, "As I perceived this statement to be a disparagement of my work, which is being carried out at the order of the Führer, I consider it my duty to communicate this to you and leave it to you to take a position on this matter." A telegram Riefenstahl sent to Hitler after the German occupation of Paris begins, "With indescribable joy, deeply moved and filled with burning gratitude, we share with you, my Führer, your and Germany's greatest victory, the entry of German troops into Paris. You exceed anything human imagination

Your Voice

YOUR VOICE (in your body rivers stir
a tranquil foliage; grave and cadenced waters).

—From this door, the pleasures, their thresholds;
from this ring, they're transfigured—

In your forests of liquid sand,
of dense, pale jade (deep water, cleaved;
this door carved into the naves of dawn). My eyes half-
shut at your slope—Water
clinging to the light (at your body the rivers merge, hardening
between nitrous ceiba trees. Flame—door of igneous glimmer—
you circle and sweat me out: over this glaze, under those spongy valleys,
between this mantle, this flesh

Coral Bracho

(translated from the Spanish by Forrest Gander)

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has the power to conceive, achieving deeds without parallel in the history of mankind." Witnessing the September 1939 murder of Polish Jews by German officers in Konskie, Poland, did not prevent her from claiming fifty years later in her memoirs, "I did not see one dead person in Poland, not one soldier, not one civilian."

One of the more horrifying examples of Riefenstahl's willful blindness and subsequent lies given special attention by both Trimborn and Bach has to do with the filming of her movie *Tiefland* in 1940. Wanting authenticity for this tale of a Gypsy dancing girl, Riefenstahl, though she later denied it, went to the Maxglan transit camp and personally selected twenty-three Gypsies interned there, fifteen of them children. She also chose sixty-eight adults and children from the Marzahn camp. In her memoirs she would claim, "We saw almost all of them again after the war. They said that working with us had been the most wonderful time of their lives. No one forced them to say this." Bach records that Riefenstahl paid their fees directly to the Gypsy General Fund to "defray overhead costs at Maxglan, especially during the coming winter should the Gypsies' 'resettlement' to Poland and points east be delayed." In effect, the Gypsies were forced unpaid labor. A month before she paid the Marzahn officials, the Gypsies were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where many died.

Riefenstahl's repeated lies about her activities at Maxglan came to light in 1982, thanks to a young filmmaker named Nina Gladitz. Bach tells the story: Gladitz discovered evidence of Riefenstahl's contracts with the SS at Maxglan. Posing as a fan, Gladitz won Riefenstahl's permission to shoot footage of the filmmaker at a book signing. There she arranged for Josef Reinhardt, who at 13 had been one of the extras chosen for *Tiefland*, to confront Riefenstahl. He was especially damaging to her claims of seeing the Gypsies after the war because he was able to match faces in production stills to names on Auschwitz death lists. The documentary Gladitz made, *A Time of Silence and Darkness*, was shown on German television in 1982. Riefenstahl sued, and after two appeals the case was decided in 1987, largely against Riefenstahl, who was found to have selected the Gypsies at Maxglan and used them as forced labor. But the one count Riefenstahl won, discounting Reinhardt's claim that she had told him that he and his fellow Gypsies were destined for Auschwitz, in effect ruined Gladitz. In order for the film to be shown, all existing prints and videocassettes had to be re-edited and the soundtrack remixed to delete Reinhardt's reference to Auschwitz. Bach points out that Gladitz, a freelancer, had no money to make the necessary alterations. Nor was German television eager to aid a film that had "triggered four years of litigation." Though Gladitz's career was effectively over, Riefenstahl, until her death, threatened to sue any institution that showed the film. (A question Bach's book raises: With Riefenstahl no longer around to intimidate anyone, isn't there some filmmaker, some museum or institution, willing to finance new copies of Gladitz's movie and bring to light the truth about one of Riefenstahl's most odious lies?)

Even with as thorough a demolition as these books accomplish, there will still be those who insist on the greatness of Riefenstahl as an artist. Their enthusiasm can be summed up by the noted character assassin John Simon, who, gushing over Riefenstahl's memoirs for the *New York Times Book Review* in 1993, concluded, "She may have compromised her humanity. But her artistic integrity, never." That quote should come as no surprise. Simon's judgment of artistic integrity has certainly never been compromised by humanity. But the belief that such a separation is possible tells us much about the fantasies of those who applaud the fantasies of Leni Riefenstahl.

To insist that art can't be separated from humanity isn't to insist that all art has to be humanist, that art should express only "good" things, or to be so naïve as to pretend that talented people are always nice people. Art opens up questions and contingencies, sharpens our perceptions instead of dulling them, expands our range of emotion instead of narrowing it and, one hopes, expands our willingness to understand experiences different from our own. "In the realm of totalitarian kitsch," Milan Kundera wrote, "all answers are given in advance and preclude any questions." That's what separates art from kitsch, and it's why art cannot be separated from humanity. What Riefenstahl achieved by leaving her humanity out of the creative process is a denial of everything art is supposed to stand for at the service of an ideology that realized its truest ambition in a war that Cyril Connolly described as being against "every reasonable conception of what life is for, every ambition of the mind or delight of the senses."

Anyone determined to look simply at Riefenstahl's aesthetics should look at the aesthetics on display in the turgid, endless *Triumph of the Will*. To watch it is to see

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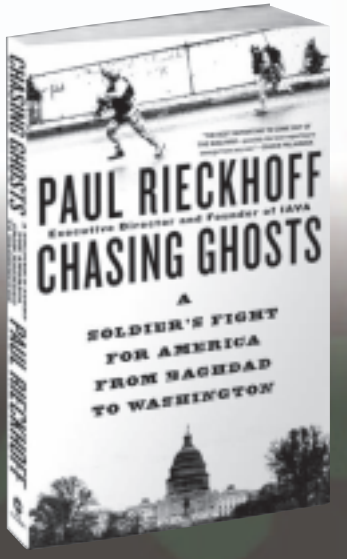

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life reduced to the view from a parade-reviewing stand. Humanity is present either in geometric formations of massed people—some marching, some standing still, none doing anything to spoil Riefenstahl's pristine design—or in ecstatic close-ups of people who can conceive of nothing more thrilling than to lose their identities in that mass. How is it that anything that *aims* for facelessness can be thought of as art?

Olympia, Riefenstahl's two-part film of the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, has always been the picture trotted out to prove that the director's aesthetic was not entirely determined by the ideology of the Third Reich. Inevitably, someone will point out the way Riefenstahl's camera admires Jesse Owens, or Japanese swimmers, or other non-Aryan athletes. And in fact, as Trimborn reports, Riefenstahl defied Goebbels's order to downplay the victories of non-Aryans.

But Riefenstahl didn't need Aryans to make *Olympia* the clearest expression of the Reich's master-race aesthetic. All she needed was to present athletes as if they were ticks on an evolutionary chart, prototypes for the master race that will one day return mankind to the glory and purity of the Greek athletes (portrayed by nude models in the film's howler of a prologue). In his great sports picture *Personal Best*, Robert Towne isolates the straining muscles of female athletes and slows down the camera to put us inside the bodies of these women so that we seem to be gliding through their routines with them: We're in harmony with their bodies and yet amazed by what they can do. That is precisely what Riefenstahl cannot do because as she presents them, the athletes, like all she worships, are above mere mortals. Following Kundera's definition of totalitarian kitsch in which "all answers are given in advance," *Olympia* allows no room for amazement. It's a given that the *über*-athletes Riefenstahl fetishizes can do what they do.

Riefenstahl has no interest in the experience of athletes who don't fit her ideal of physical perfection. You can't imagine her making a place for Emily Dole, "The Throwin' Samoan," the all-American shot-put champ who shows up in *Personal Best*. Squat and well over 200 pounds, with her frizzy hair sticking out in clumps, Dole looks nothing like the athletic ideal, and yet in action, she gives you the rare joy of watching someone doing what they were made to do.

To watch *Olympia* in tandem with *Tokyo Olympiad*, Kon Ichikawa's masterful epic of the 1964 Olympic Games, is to see the claim to art of Riefenstahl's film collapse but to understand its value as propaganda. One of the first sights Ichikawa shows us is the shells of buildings destroyed in the Allied bombing being pulled down to make way for the Olympic stadium. You can argue it's an ambiguous image, one that can be read as both a suggestion of what Japan wrought and what it suffered. But whatever way you read it, it is an acknowledgment of the fact of war. And so is the shot of Emperor Hirohito, no longer a divine being but a human bowing before the assembled athletes as he declares the games open.

There is no similar acknowledgment of reality in Riefenstahl's film. In Philip Kerr's novel *March Violets*, set in Berlin during the games, his detective hero, Bernie Gunther, sees two SA men taking down the kiosks selling *Der Stürmer*. "It's for the Olympiad," one of them tells Bernie. "We're ordered to take them all down so as not to shock the foreign visitors who will be coming to Berlin to see the Games." Bernie comments, "In my experience, such sensitivity on the part of the authorities is unheard of." Riefenstahl's film is the actions of those two SA men writ large. As Bach notes, it's the cinematic version of Hitler's sanitization of Berlin, and thus a much more insidious piece of propaganda than *Triumph of the Will*. That film is a souvenir book for true believers. *Olympia* is designed to show Nazi Germany as a place where athletes and spectators from all over the world can gather and compete in peace and brotherhood. In the August 1, 1936, edition of this publication, a correspondent reported from Germany: "He sees no Jewish heads being chopped off.... People smile, are polite, and sing with gusto in beer gardens. Board and lodging are good, cheap, and abundant.... Everything is terrifyingly clean and the visitor likes it all." That's the voice of someone bamboozled by Hitler's clean-up campaign. *Olympia* is that campaign.

None of this is to say that form can never be separated from content. At its most benign, that separation can be a case of a talented director making something stylish and witty and entertaining out of trashy, routine material (or a good script ruined by bad direction). And we certainly have to be able to separate art from politics. The best liberal intentions have never made John Sayles's movies anything more than plodding, inept pieces of storytelling. The most simplistic fantasies of agrarian revolt cannot make Bernardo Bertolucci's *1900* anything less than one of the movies' most staggering examples of epic lyrical filmmaking.

There are great pieces of political film-

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making that don't pose a moral dilemma because what they expose is so obviously an injustice. Movies like Costa-Gavras's *Z* or Paul Greengrass's *Bloody Sunday* or Barbara Kopple's documentaries *Harlan County, U.S.A.* and *American Dream* rouse our passion for justice more than our thirst for vengeance. The same is true of Hollywood's tradition of good liberal muckraking melodrama, from Mervyn LeRoy's *I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang* to Martin Ritt's *Norma Rae* or Tony Richardson's *The Border*.

But if we are truly going to face up to the movies' propagandistic potential, we can't sit back and pretend to be aloof from the feelings the most talented polemical filmmakers can rouse, even if we are appalled by those feelings. It's cowardly to acclaim *The Birth of a Nation* as significant because it was the first film to succeed on an epic scale without acknowledging Griffith's ability to get our blood pounding as we watch the Klan race to the rescue in the climax. Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* is so brilliantly made, so emotionally involving that you glide right past its contention that violence was the only avenue open to Algerians under French colonialism. And while I'd argue that *Potemkin*, like all of Eisenstein's films, is more a demonstration of his theories of montage than a dramatic experience, there is no denying the revolutionary fervor the director stirred up.

Riefenstahl's admirers have never owned up to whether or not her movies make them feel a similar surge. And the films may not match the same excitement you feel watching Griffith or Pontecorvo or Costa-Gavras or Eisenstein. But that would suggest that the greatness claimed for Riefenstahl is a purely technical triumph, and that it's necessary to empty her films of their emotional and moral content before being able to praise them. For those who see art in the work of Leni Riefenstahl, it's not enough to express their admiration. Her admirers have to fess up to whether, if only for the time the film is running through the projector, they feel any temptation to give themselves over to Riefenstahl's vision. ■

FILMS

Desire and Its Discontents

STUART KLAWANS

SYNDROMES AND A CENTURY • PRIVATE FEARS IN PUBLIC PLACES • JACK SMITH AND THE DESTRUCTION OF ATLANTIS • STEPHANIE DALEY

Life isn't a meaning, said Chaplin, but a desire. I may be quoting inaccurately, but given the sentiment, who cares? Chaplin was so precise in his art that he could roller-skate blindfolded to the edge of an abyss; and yet, true to his words, he seemed to love the audience's giddiness a little more than his own supreme poise, the image of an open road more than the certainty of "The End."

Giddiness, openness, poise, desire: These words may do as well as any to suggest the life you find everywhere in the inexplicable but wondrous *Syndromes and a Century*. Written and directed by Thailand's Apichatpong Weerasethakul (or Joe, as he's often called in the West), *Syndromes and a Century* is a work of immaculate craftsmanship, but one that is impossible to summarize, any more than a wind-sown arboreal orchid (one of the film's main props) could be brought to ground. All you might say, in a pinch, is that the movie consists of scenes in and around two present-day hospitals, one somewhere in the countryside and the other in Bangkok.

No story links these two places; and since a separate stretch of movie is dedicated to each—first the rural hospital, then the urban one—you might even say that the running time sets them apart. Nothing crosses this divide except a Cheshire-cat smile. A woman called Dr. Toey (Nantarat Sawaddikul) and a man called Dr. Nohng (Jaruchai Iamaram) appear in both halves of the film, but I can't say whether these figures are meant to be the same people working in different places or whether the hospitals are staffed by identically named look-alikes. Incidents recur, too—a soldier awkwardly declares his love for Dr. Toey, an elderly monk recounts a troubling dream about a chicken, a young monk undergoes dental treatment—but with varia-

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tions that alter the tone of each encounter. (The outcomes can't be changed because there aren't any, cause and effect having been suspended as airily as the orchid.) On a higher level of variation, motifs including exercise classes, public recreations and renditions of pop music are enacted in rural and urban versions, cheerfully but to no apparent purpose.

Do these doublings mean anything at all? In statements and interviews, Joe has spoken of them as expressions of his belief in reincarnation. But since the film's monks have the best lines about that topic, I will concentrate on Joe's explanation that his parents were doctors "who raised us kids in a house provided by the small-town hospital where they worked." This place has now changed so much, he says, that "the landscapes and hospital buildings that I remember simply don't exist anymore." Unable to recapture his memories of the past, he has taken pleasure in recapturing the feelings evoked by his memories. Beyond that, he says, *Syndromes and a Century* is "an experiment in re-creation of my parents' lives before I was born," with the movie's first half focused on a figure ostensibly representing his mother and the second half on the father figure.

Plausible. But if Dr. Toey and Dr. Nohng are supposed to become Joe's parents, they don't make any progress on it in this movie, where their sole encounter is charming, brief and entirely official. There's plenty of desire in part one, but it flows from a lovesick soldier (Nu Nimsomboon) toward Dr. Toey, who can respond only with a diagnosis; from Dr. Toey toward a botanist (Sophon Pukanok), who seems in recollection to have been more interested in the arboreal orchid than in her; and from a pop-singing dentist (Arkanae Cherkam) toward an object of romantic interest who is unattainable, being a monk (Sakda Kaewbuadee).

In part two, desire is better satisfied, since Dr. Nohng gets to neck in the hospital corridor with his girlfriend (Jarunee Saengtupthim) before slipping with her into a basement office. Yet gratification, O Noble Siddhartha, may not add up to happiness. The girlfriend wants Dr. Nohng to relocate to some Brutalist development zone (she's got construction photos, which are not encouraging), as if his hospital were not sufficiently cold and fluorescent. In Part One, by contrast, even though love goes unfulfilled, the characters live in a lush and sunny place that is itself both solace and sweet mystery.

The notion that the jungle can spring beautiful surprises on you just as readily as it tosses up tigers or sorcerers has been a part of Joe's work since his first feature, *Mysterious Object at Noon* (2000): a quasi documentary in which he began telling a story and then went around Thailand having different individuals and groups continue it, at one point in full-scale folk opera performance. As in any *cadavre exquis*, the gaps, incongruities and wild transformations could strike you by turns as humorous or grotesque, suggestive or uncanny. The difference in *Mysterious Object* was that they also seemed communal and revelatory: glimpses into a startling inner life shared by people all over Thailand.

So, too, in *Syndromes and a Century*, unexpected marvels keep popping up in everyday circumstances. That charming meeting between Dr. Toey and Dr. Nohng, for example, is a personnel interview, which she conducts when he reports for work at the hospital. It's a perfectly normal occasion, except for her asking questions such as, "Which do you prefer to draw, circles or triangles?" The answer, in this movie, has got to be circles. Dr. Nohng delivers it with the same quiet thoughtfulness that he accords all of Dr. Toey's non sequiturs, and she accepts his response in the same spirit, as if nothing he says could be wrong. "What do the initials DDT stand for?" she asks, apropos of nothing. After a moment's hesitation, he replies, "Destroy Dirty Things," and she, following a pause, writes the words down.

This spirit of acceptance seems to me to be the key to the movie's doublings. However Joe might explain them, they come off simply as alternate possibilities, which arise in no particular order and need be given no absolute value. Of course, you might prefer some to others—there are plenty of disappointments in the film, along with aggravations, failures and disabling maladies—but since all of them could be real, they all seem equally alive, and miraculous.

How so? Look at the endlessly delightful compositions that Joe gives you, with the characters often grouped toward one side and the other left unpopulated, so the frame is ripe with potential. Look at the light, which can be paradoxically strong in the distance and shadowed in the foreground. (Nature, in this movie, makes no assumptions about which part of the picture is important.) Watch how freely your point of view changes—now showing you one angle on a scene, now (for no special reason) a different angle that's just as good, and now wandering off to study something irrelevant but lovely.

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Or listen as the crooning dentist gets closer to his beloved. Standing on a veranda in the night, the dentist recounts the tragic death years ago of his brother, then wonders if that long-lost boy could have been reincarnated as this monk.

"No," says the monk, with a broad-mindedness typical of *Syndromes and a Century*. "In my last life, I wasn't human."

Half a century ago, before Joe was born, Alain Resnais was already rearranging time and space to suit his fancy. Now the old master, fresh as ever, has done it again, following six characters as they intersect (but don't necessarily meet) in *Private Fears in Public Places*.

Adapted by screenwriter Jean-Michel Ribes from a play by Alan Ayckbourn—another relocation, which puts Paris in the place of London—*Private Fears in Public Places* is a very sad and loveless romantic comedy, filmed in the medium of snow. Snow falls in the streets, on TV screens, at one point inside a home and always between the scenes, which smoothly shift with each new flurry. If there is any central location, it would be a nightmarishly fashionable hotel bar presided over by Lionel (the gravely impeccable Pierre Arditi), who observes the coming together and splitting apart of three other characters. This makes him almost as omniscient as the camera. But Lionel cannot see himself, so he doesn't know that a fourth character of his acquaintance, the devout Charlotte (Sabine Azéma, off her rocker again), leads a triple life: in his home at night (nursing his aged and demented father), in a real estate office during the day (renting apartments and arousing the fantasies of a co-worker, André Dussollier) and on video, where she looks a lot less pious.

The other "public places" of the title are no doubt the real estate agency's empty apartments: mazes in which some of the characters disconsolately wander. The other actors are Isabelle Carré, Laura Morante and Lambert Wilson. Sorry not to have mentioned them earlier. They're perfect. So is the film.

Only the maddest love could have moved Mary Jordan to assemble her documentary *Jack Smith and the Destruction of Atlantis*. Why, you practically have to prize scraps of Smith's films from the claws of the Roc, ransom Ali Baba's treasure to pay for music rights, harrow the crypts of a vanished Underground to interview the specters—and then what have you got? Not just a critical biography of a protean artist, who seems in retrospect the

EVENTS

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NATIONAL

April 28: Nationwide Impeachment Protests

■ George Bush and Dick Cheney have committed numerous high crimes and misdemeanors, including misleading the nation into a war of aggression, spying in open violation of the law and sanctioning the use of torture. The Green Party, Code Pink, Progressive Democrats of America and others have launched a major new campaign to pursue accountability for these crimes through the constitutional remedy of impeachment. Since Congress doesn't seem to get it, we're calling on all Americans who stand for truth rather than lying, freedom rather than spying, and justice rather than torture to join us on April 28 in spelling it out for them: IMPEACH! For more information, please visit www.a28.org.

NEW YORK

Amy Goodman

■ Conference on Creating Peace and Social Justice. New York Marriott at the Brooklyn Bridge in Brooklyn, April 26–30. *Democracy Now!* host Amy Goodman, Laura Chasin of the Public Conversations Project and Dr. Paul Epstein, ND, are just three of 150 outstanding speakers and trainers scheduled to present at "Give Peace a Chance: Community Consciousness, Inner Wisdom and Social Change," for the sixty-fifth annual meeting of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama. Featuring cutting-edge approaches to social issues. An opportunity to experience the power of action methods as a way to understand and address the compelling problems of our time—e.g., effects of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan both overseas and here at home, a looming environmental crisis, socioeconomic injustice—which have real and direct consequences to the psychological and emotional health of individuals and communities. Trainers will present a range of experiential and instructional workshops delving into the interconnectedness of social and personal well-being, exploring creative action to improve lives, address ways to heal the psychic wounds of war and coming to peace after grief and loss; and explore treatment for child survivors of domestic violence and the treatment of addiction and trauma. Open to the general community and of particular interest to mental health professionals, educators, students, community organizers, activists, creative arts professionals and lawyers. Continuing education credits will be granted. Information: www.asgpp.org and www.myspace.com/asgppgivepeaceachance. (609) 453-1339.

Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove

■ Special evening of readings from their book *Voices of a People's History of the United States*. Wednesday, May 2, 6:30 PM. With performances by Danny Glover, Ally Sheedy, Stanley Tucci, Allison Moorer, Brian Jones, Kathleen Chalfant, Steve Earle, Harris Yulin, Staceyann Chin, Opal Alladin, Erin Cherry, Deepa Fernandes and other special guests. Narration and introduction by Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove. The Great Hall, Cooper Union. Free to the public. Sponsored by The Cooper Union. *Voices of a People's History of the United States* (www.sevenstories.com/Book/index.cfm?GCOI=58322100666900), edited by Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove, is the companion volume to *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn. It features the words of rebels, dissenters and visionaries from our past—and present—including Malcolm X, Frederick Douglass, Fannie Lou Hamer, Maria Stewart, Tecumseh, Emma Goldman, Paul Robeson, Susan B. Anthony, Yuri Kochiyama, Leonard Peltier, Cindy Sheehan, Martin Luther King Jr., Henry Turner and many others. The public performances of *Voices* are inspiring, challenging reminders of our rich history of protest and its relevance for today.

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most central of all marginalists; not just an excavation of New York's queerest avant-garde, 1953–89; and not at all, thank God, an imitative baroque mishmash that nobody would have watched without being paid for it. Unlike its subject, who wanted to make art "for everybody" but by the end was priest of a one-man cult, Jordan's *Jack Smith* has the popular touch. It's clear, brisk, informative and touching, even at moments of going evocatively gaga.

Did Fellini really need Smith's example to make *Juliet of the Spirits*? Did Warhol actually steal his ideas from Smith? Do half of today's music videos look like Smith's work (and would he have been proud of it, if they did)? No, no, no and no, despite what various yakkers tell you in the film. That's the flaw I can point out in *Jack Smith*. (So could anyone who knows the symptoms of infatuation.) The greatest virtue: It's done, complete, against all odds—and if you're in New York, you can still catch it at Film Forum, through April 24.

Hilary Brougher's script for *Stephanie Daley* is so deft, and Amber Tamblyn's performance in the title role is so deeply, unsettlingly persuasive, that the full devastation hits you only with the film's final lines. A teenager in upstate New York is under indictment, charged with murdering a baby she claims she didn't know she was carrying. Over her head hovers an adult world populated by people who will judge her but who may be lost themselves. Around her is a fully credible teenage world of shame, religiosity and boiling hormones. These two come together a bit uneasily under Brougher's direction, mostly because the chief adult, a forensic psychologist, is played by Tilda Swinton at her most brittle and posturing. So concentrate on Tamblyn instead. She'll pull you into a mystery as dark as murder itself. ■

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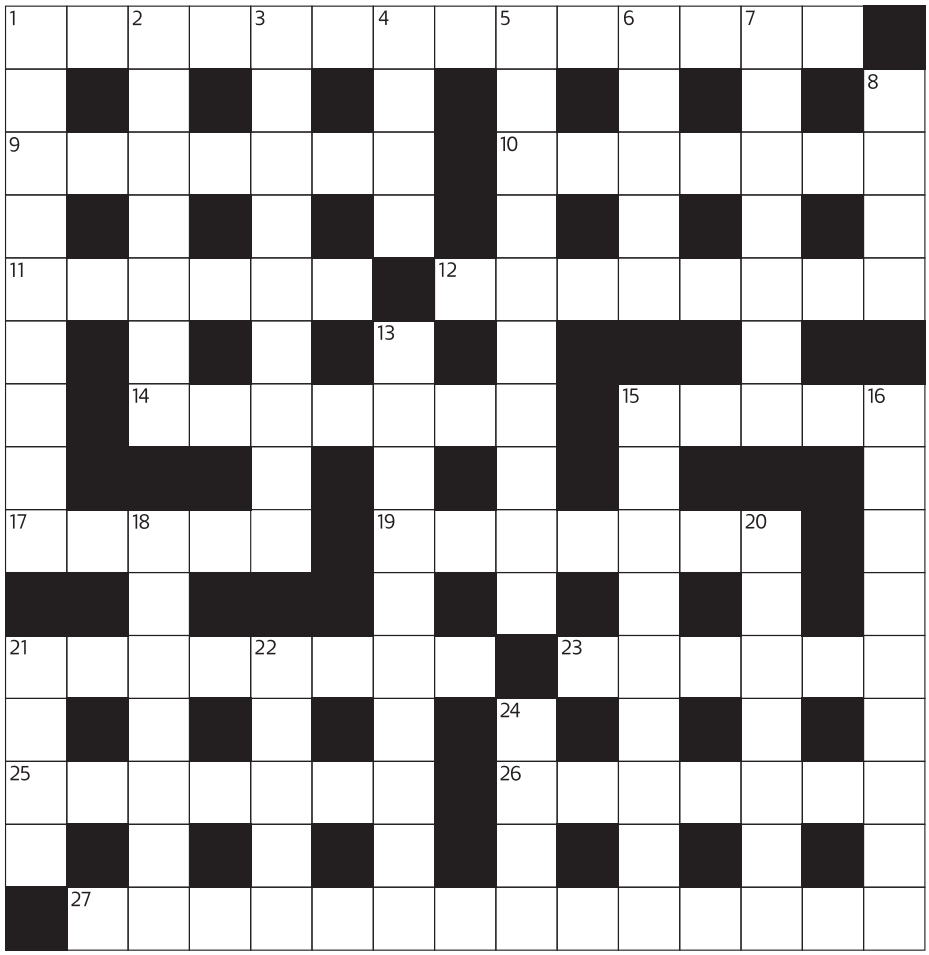

ACROSS

1 Don't sisters get any love from them? (14)

9 What Jock might be called is up incorrectly around it, just for dessert. (7)

10 What she did to win out, according to Goldsmith. (Entrances in Baltimore are reputed to be.) (7)

11 Somewhat crotchety, alternatively going to just one point on the little railway. (6)

12 Associated with things that go bump in the night, to exist like things around the neck, for some. (8)

14 A little tree, confused, laps gin. (7)

15 When on foot, you might not like them, and deal out scorn with some confusion. (5)

17 A place where you expect to find one in the sitting place? (5)

19 Were they just hanging around in Babylon? (7)

21 Equal to nothing passed on and made fun of. (8)

23 Standing in for someone—especially on the stage. (6)

25 Showing a certain amount of reverence in what gets planted, in the ocean, too. (7)

26 A lot of weight, certainly—usually found on top. (7)

27 They might house the music types, with "jams" around a riot let loose. (14)

DOWN

1 These are a cinch to get up, up on those who help you along too heartily. (9)

2 The soldier gets up when our country is disturbed about articles on certain arboreal lizards. (7)

3 Religious writing of uncertain origin where the military address finds a peculiar chap has the heart of a god, according to some. (9)

4 and **22** They are up to no good, and not taped up—acts about right, as well. (4-5)

5 The humorist said they should be around when punch is served. (The opening in the mountains gets sort of green, to a point.) (10)

6 and **8** The old ship presses a certain date, just like Cromwell. (9)

7 A bit more chilly, though one with a point comes up to dock. (7)

8 See 6

13 Instigator proving to be an unmentioned champion, with the main part inside. (10)

15 An indication that a bit more gradual force is desired. (9)

16 Their import might be desirable, but illegal. (9)

18 Distant music at one time, which came to nothing—just a hodgepodge. (7)

20 They might get a certain response, but it's rising over a mulish start. (7)

21 Possibly stop the mail? (4)

22 See 4

24 An old porch where Zeno and his crowd hung out, at so much trouble? (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3079

		W	I	T	H	D	R	A	W	I	N	G		
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